Where did that unresolvable irritation, that straightforward rage that I used to have back then, where did it go?

Cotton

紺野キタ

Cotton

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ポプラ社

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Cotton

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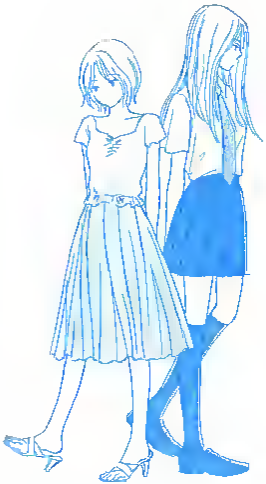


Translation
BOKE
Proofreading
EXEUNTSL
Editing
NOMAD SOUL

kotonoho monkey-pirate.com

Cotton

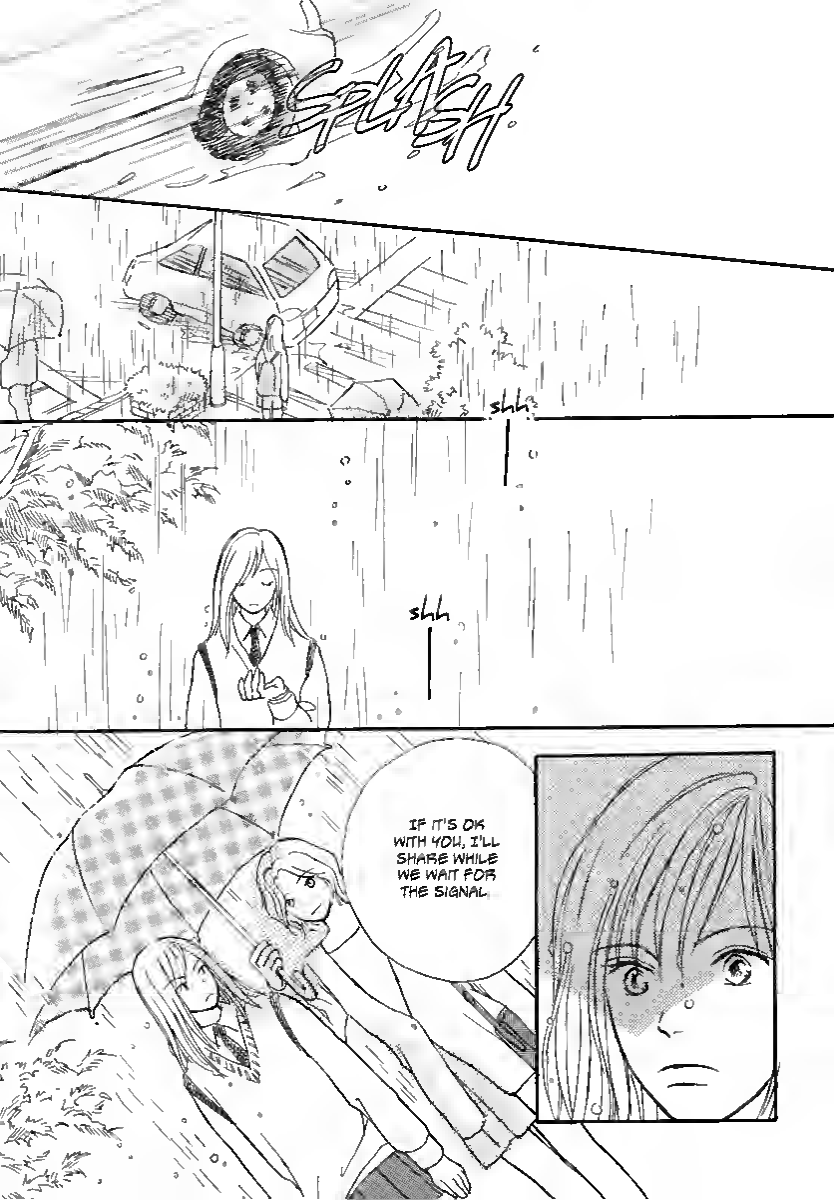
Yeah

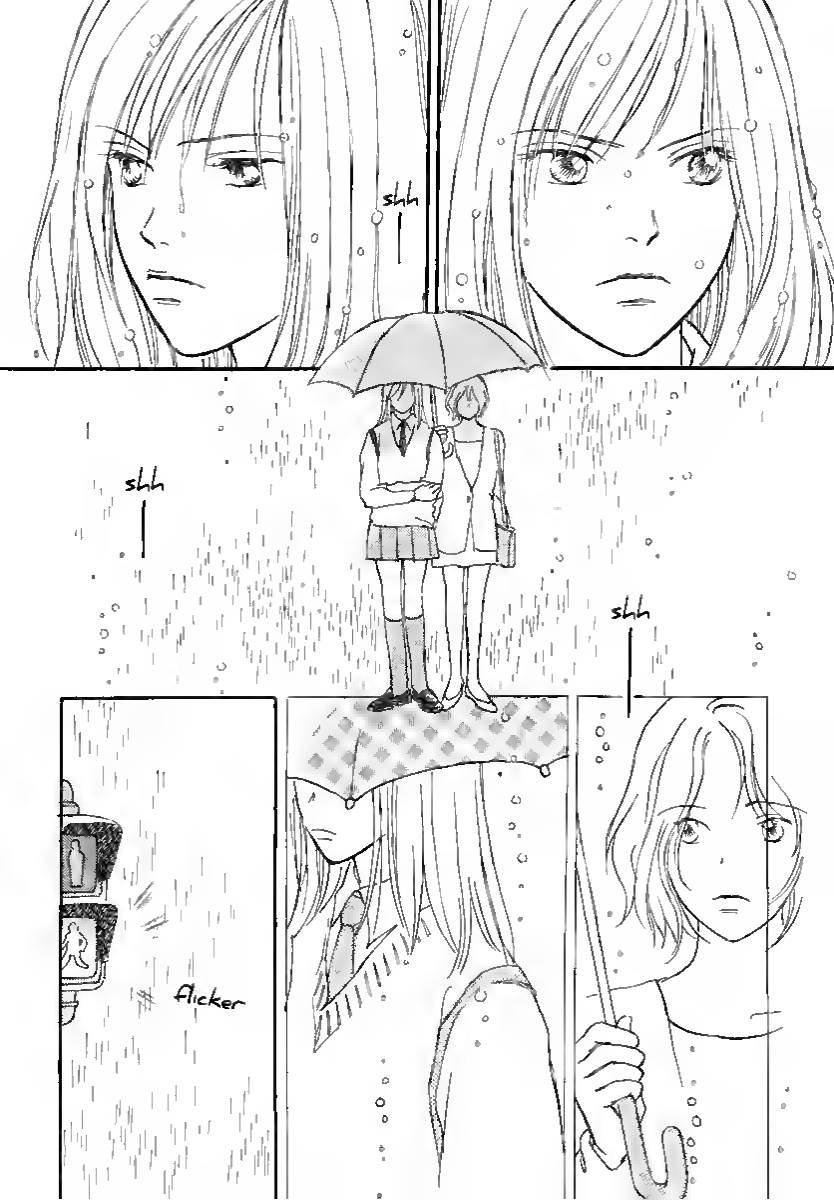
For example,
something soft and
nice to the skin
like cotton

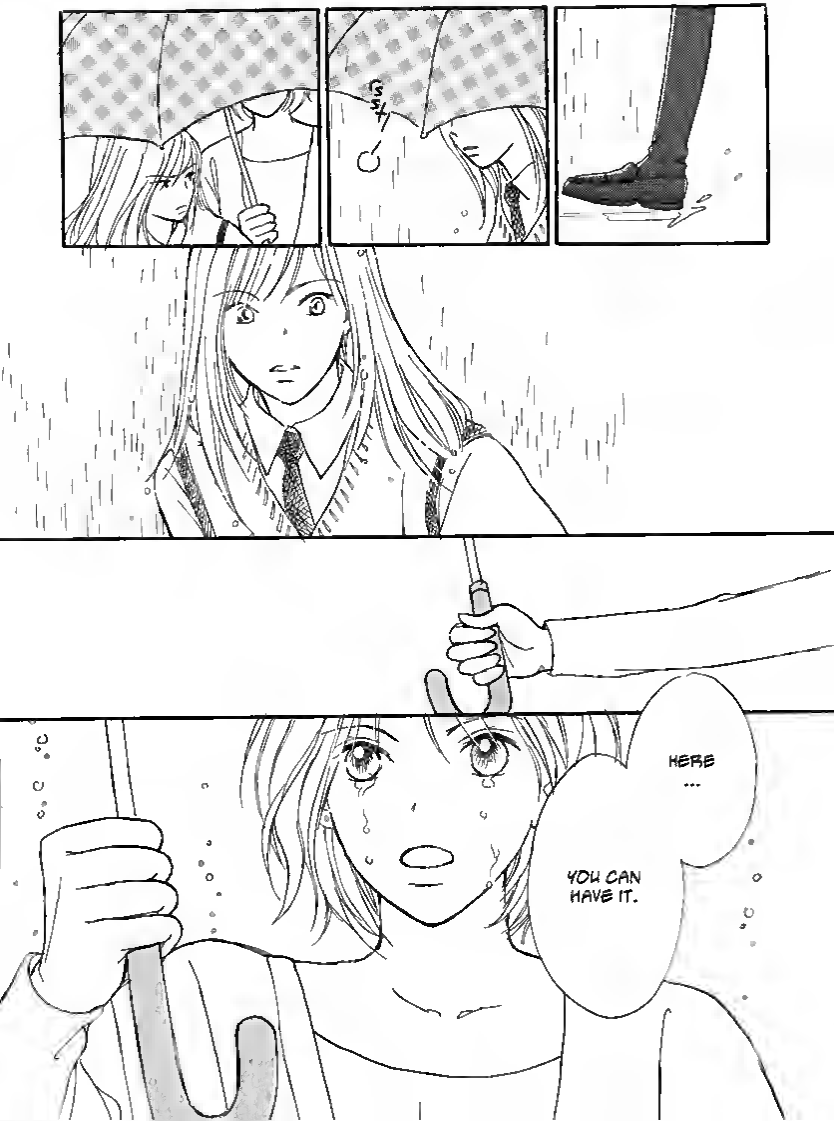
I want to wrap up that

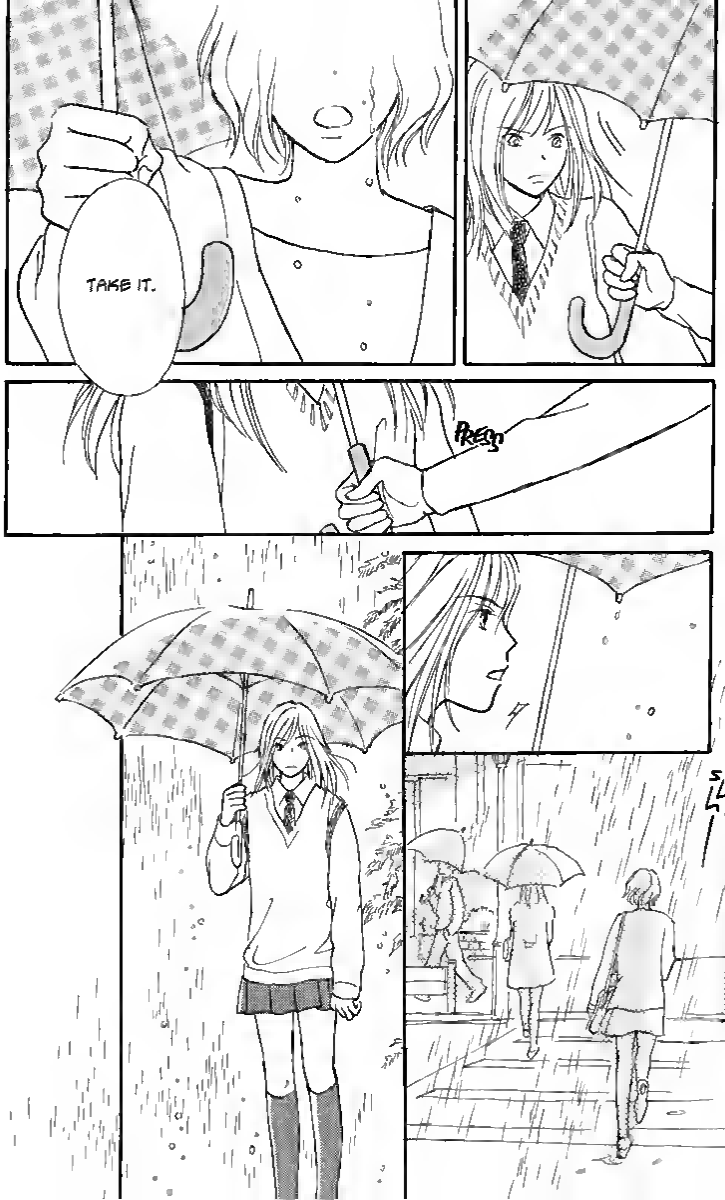
Naked
shivering
child

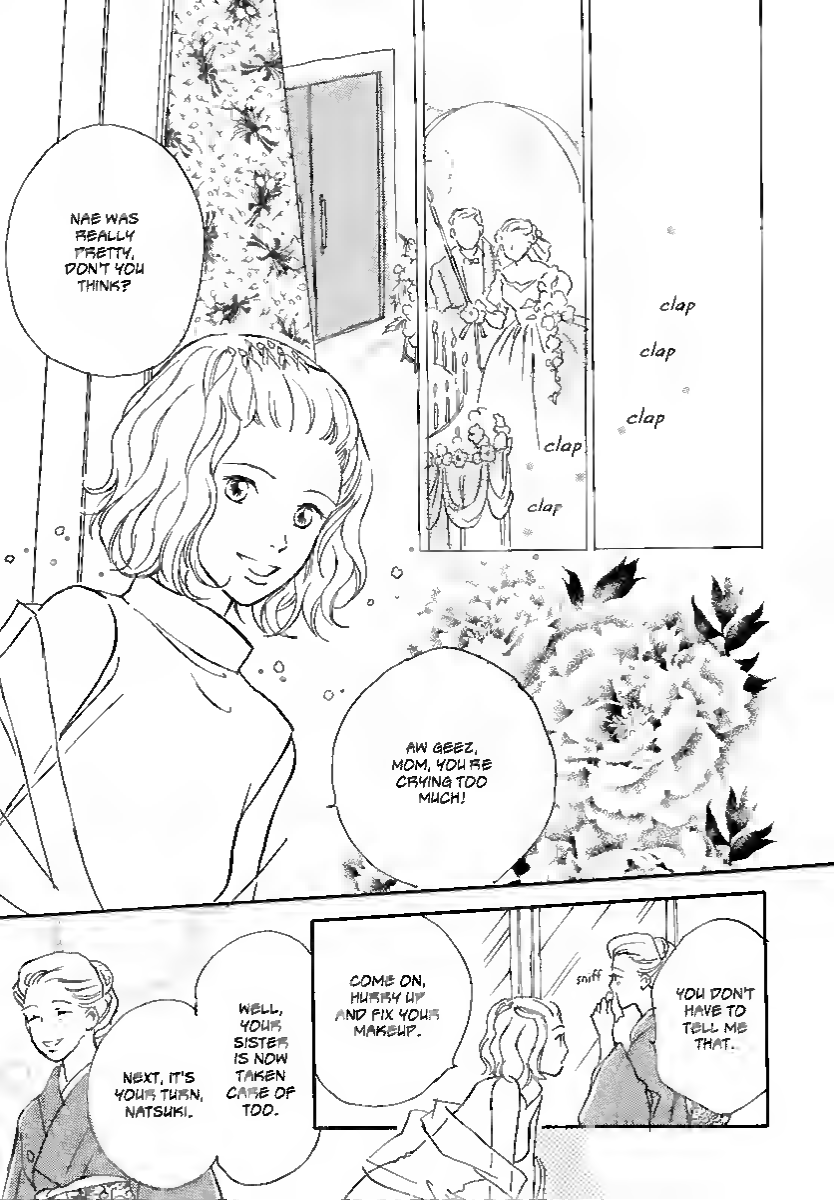
In something gentle
like that

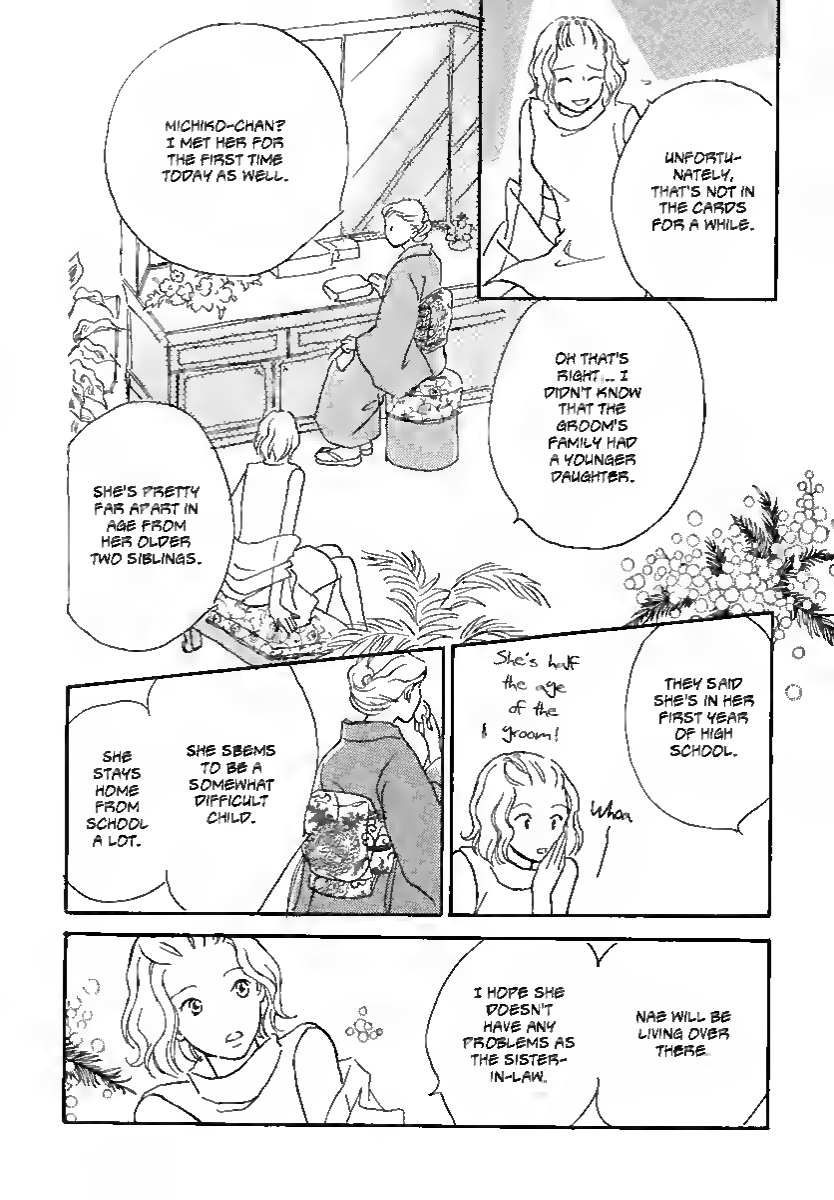

SPLASH
shh
shh
IF IT'S OK WITH YOU, I'LL SHARE WHILE WE WAIT FOR THE SIGNAL

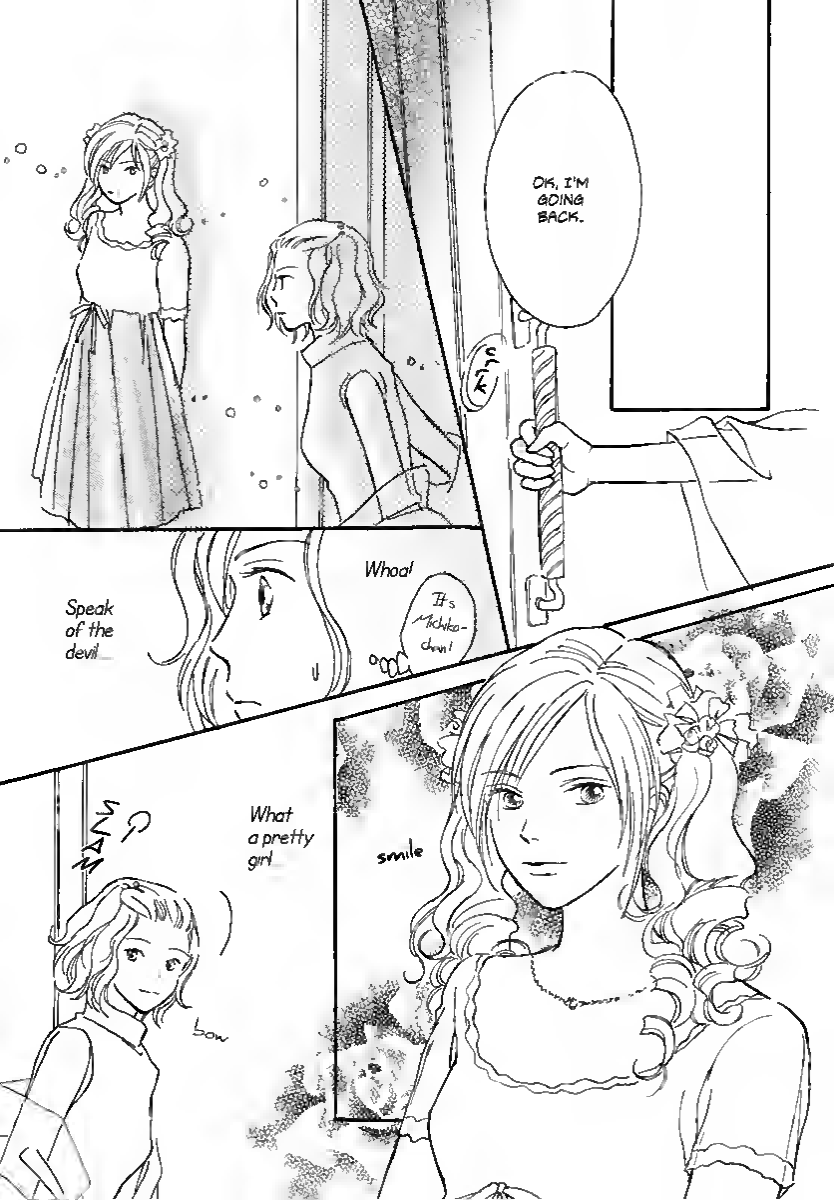

shh
shh
shh
flicker

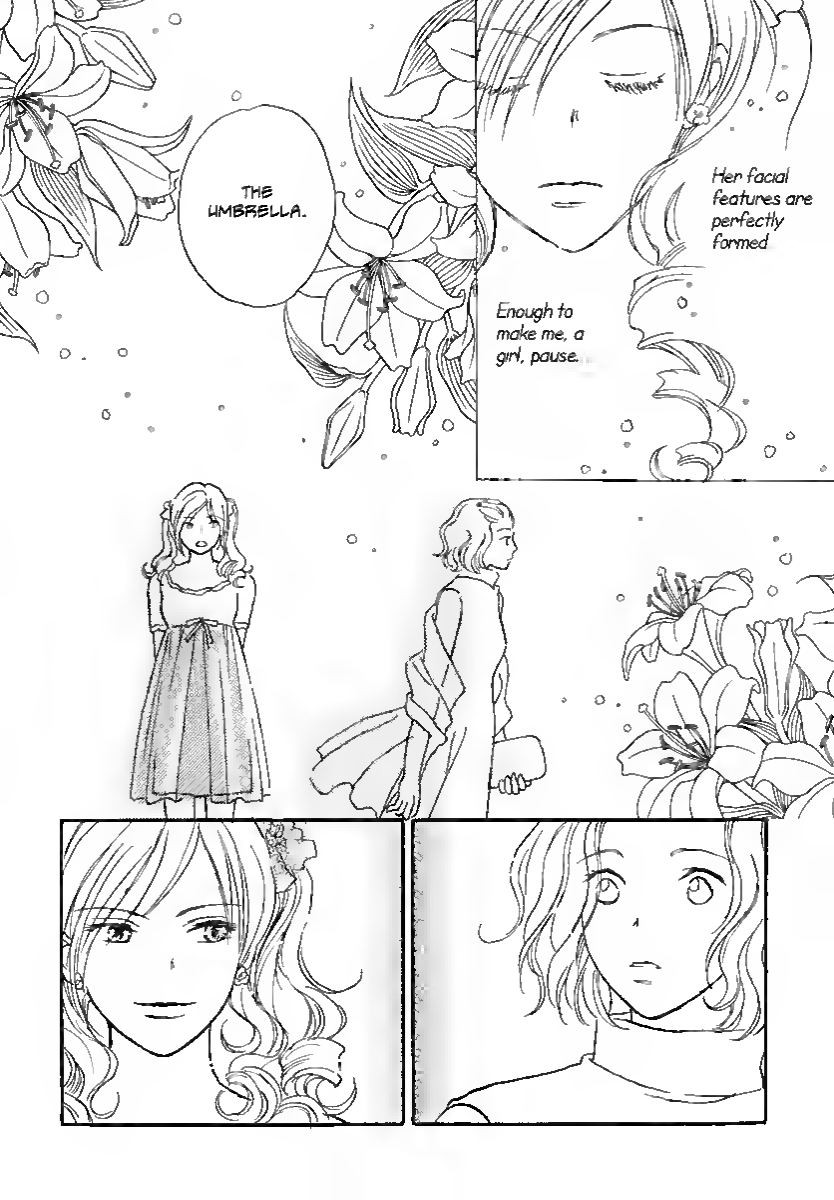

SSA
HERE ...
YOU CAN HAVE IT.

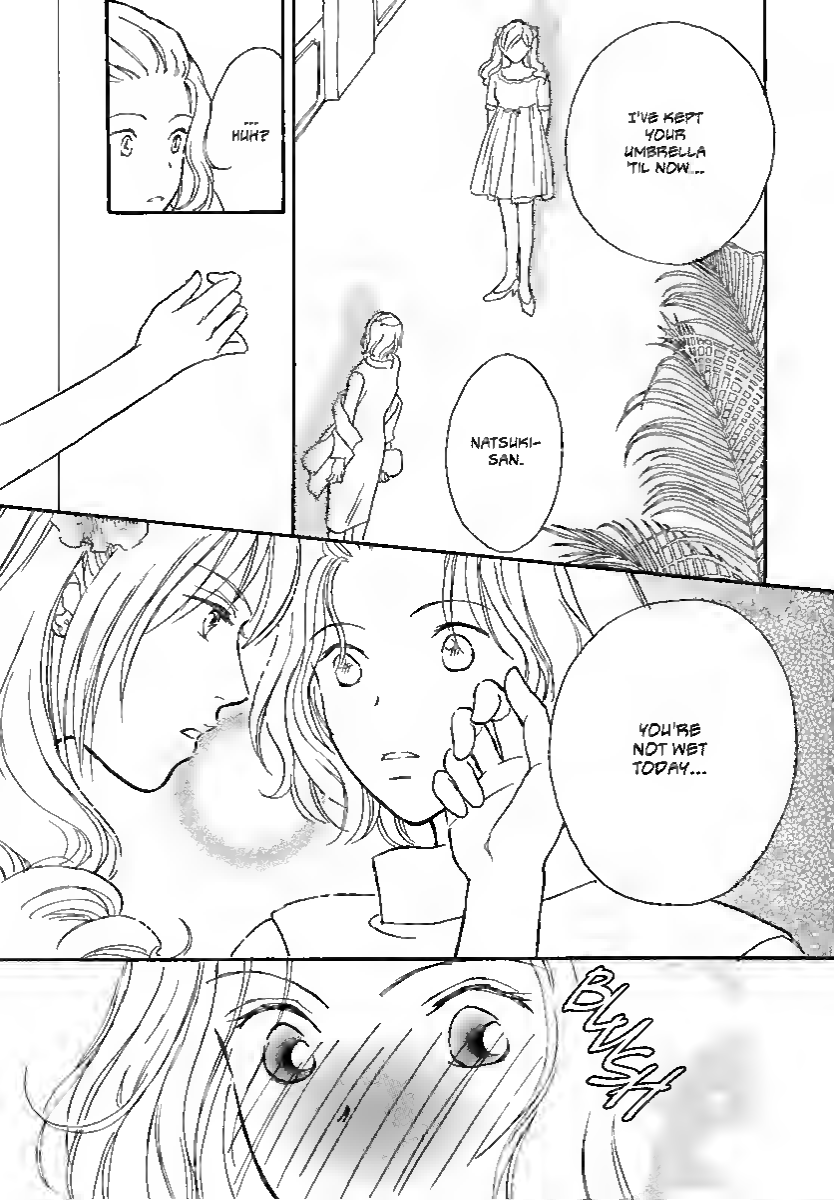

TAKE IT.
PRESS

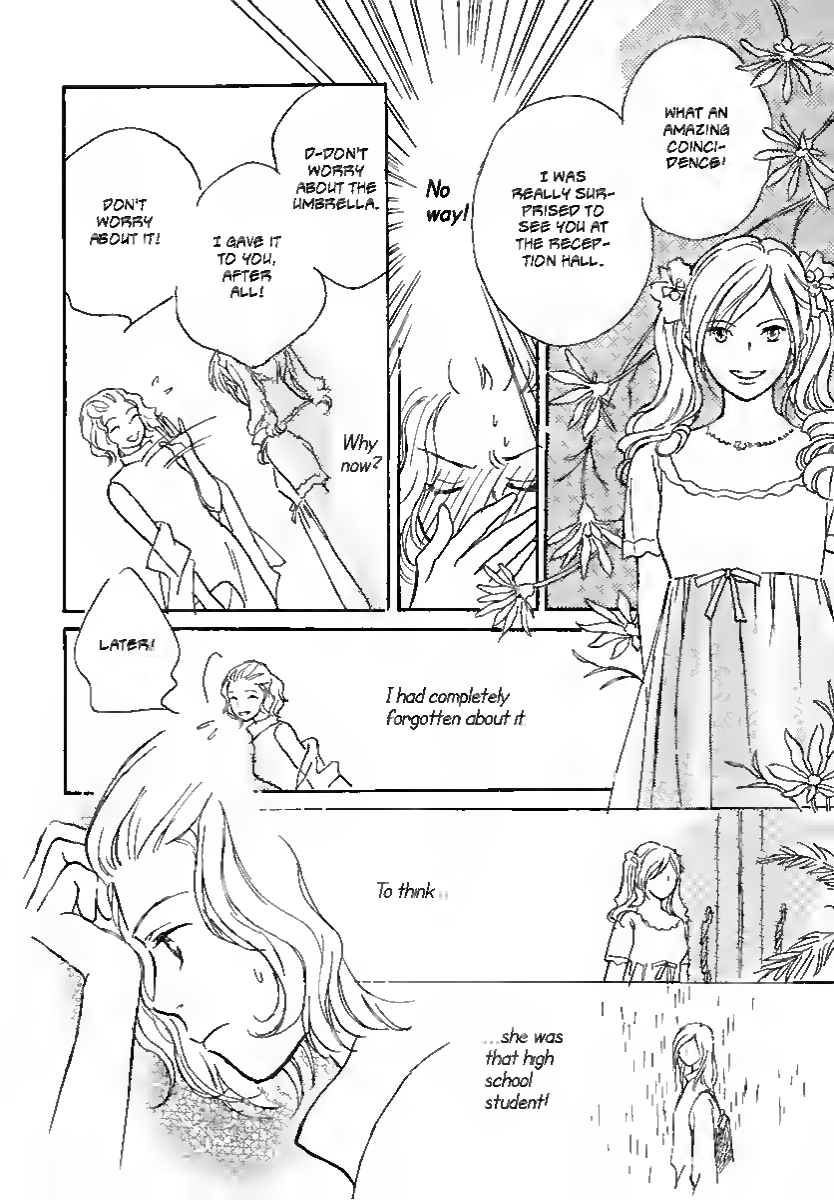

NAE WAS REALLY PRETTY, DON'T YOU THINK?
clap
clap
clap
clap
clap
AW GEEZ, MOM, YOU'RE CRYING TOO MUCH!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME THAT.
sniff
COME ON, HURRY UP AND FIX YOUR MAKEUP.
WELL, YOUR SISTER IS NOW TAKEN CARE OF TOO.
NEXT, IT'S YOUR TURN, NATSUKI.


MICHIKO-CHAN? I MET HER FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY AS WELL.
UNFORTU-NATELY, THAT'S NOT IN THE CARDS FOR A WHILE.
OH THAT'S RIGHT... I DIDN'T KNOW THAT THE GROOM'S FAMILY HAD A YOUNGER DAUGHTER.
SHE'S PRETTY FAR APART IN AGE FROM HER OLDER TWO SIBLINGS.
She's half the age of the groom!
Whoa
THEY SAID SHE'S IN HER FIRST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL.
SHE SEEMS TO BE A SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT CHILD.
SHE STAYS HOME FROM SCHOOL A LOT.
I HOPE SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS AS THE SISTER-IN-LAW.
NAO WILL BE LIVING OVER THERE.

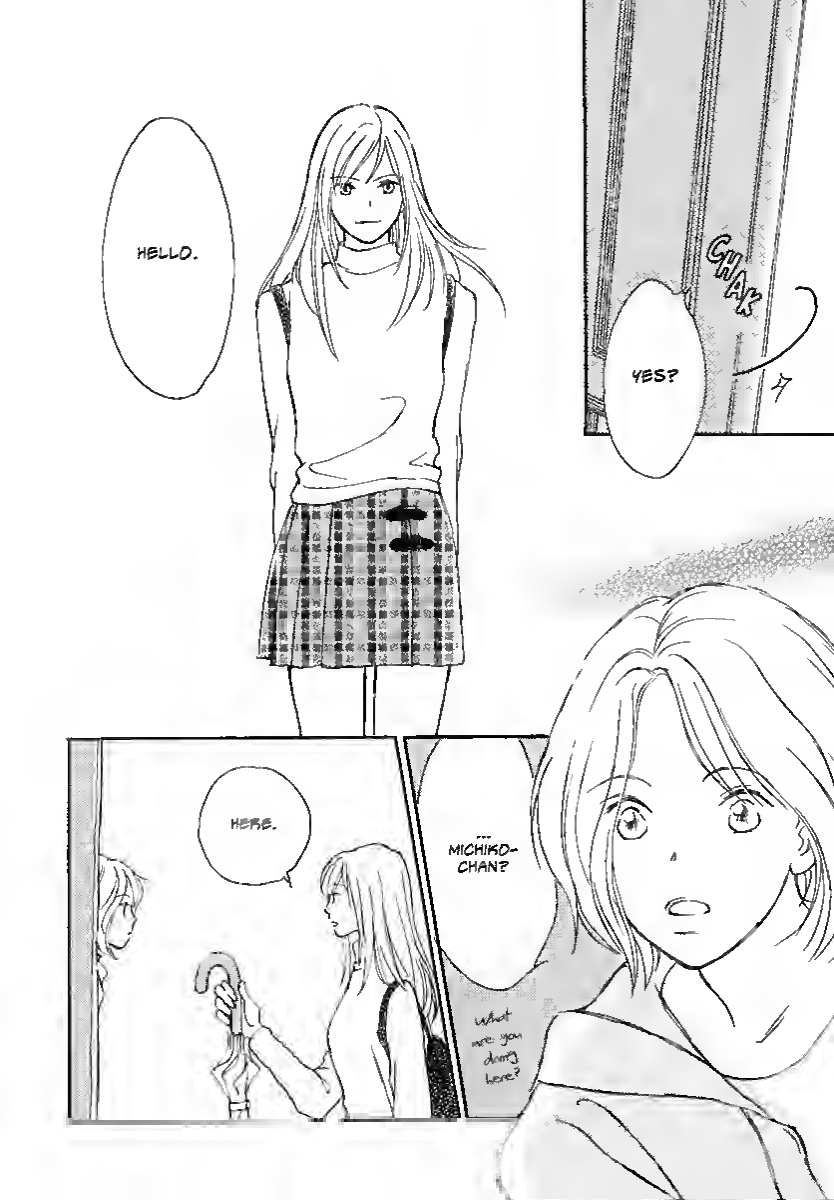

OK, I'M GOING BACK.
Whoa!
It's Ichika-chan!
Speak of the devil...
What a pretty girl...
smile
bow

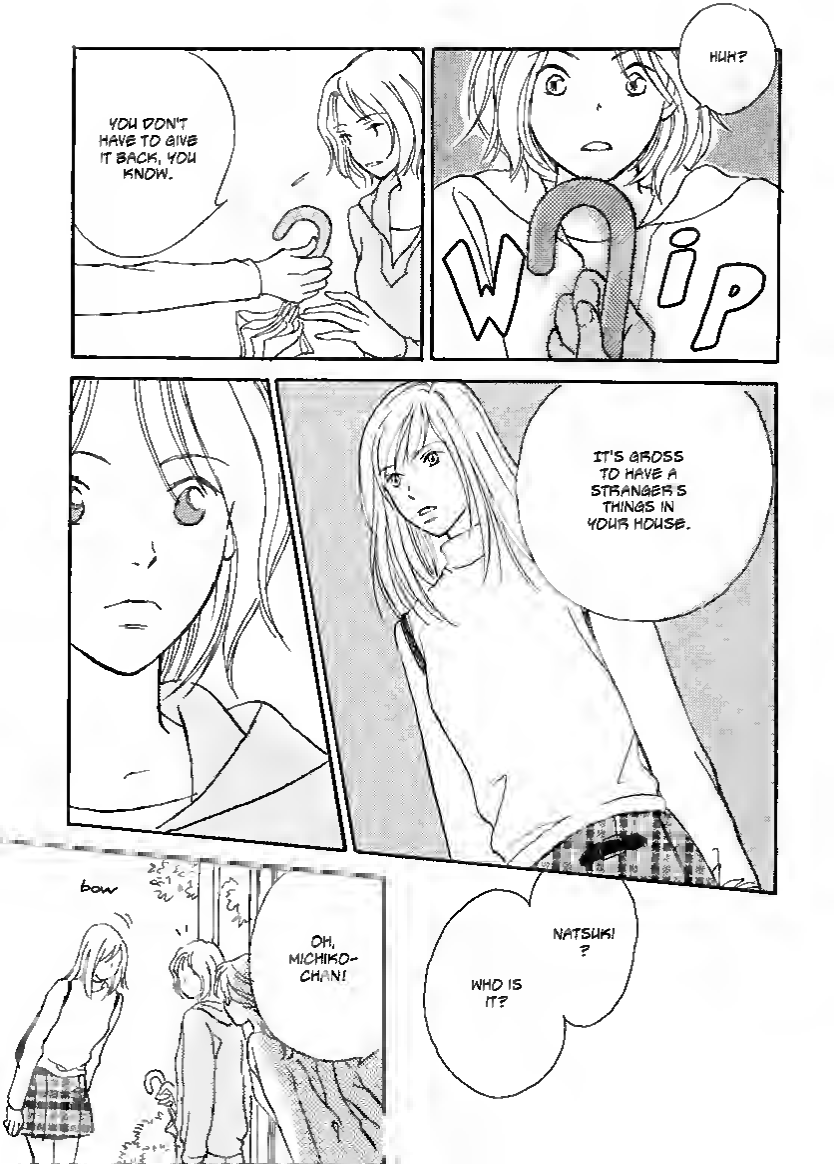

THE UMBRELLA.
Her facial features are perfectly formed
Enough to make me, a girl, pause.


... HUH?
I'VE KEPT YOUR UMBRELLA 'TIL NOW...
NATSUKI-SAN.
YOU'RE NOT WET TODAY...
BLUSH

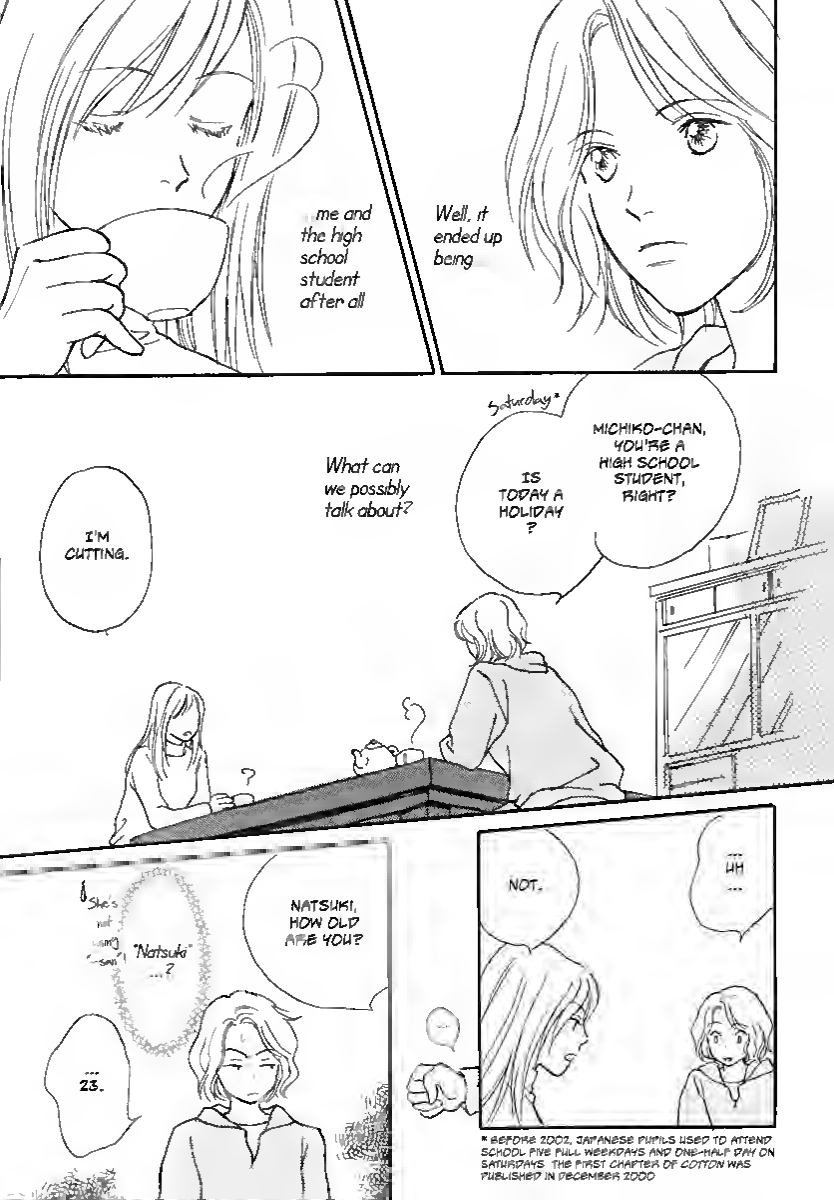

WHAT AN AMAZING COINCI-DENCE!
I WAS REALLY SUR-PRISED TO SEE YOU AT THE RECEP-TION HALL.
No way!
D-DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE UMBRELLA.
I GAVE IT TO YOU, AFTER ALL!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
Why now?
LATER!
I had completely forgotten about it
To think...
...she was that high school student!

I JUST CAN'T DO BAD THINGS.
WHAT'S WITH YOU? HAVE YOU DONE SOMETHING TO EARN A GUILTY CONSCIENCE?
I WAS JUST TALKING IN GENERALITIES.
IT'S A PRETTY SMALL WORLD.
SIS'S GOT A PRETTY THICK SKIN TO BE SEEN LIKE THAT.
But anyway
I wouldn't have the guts to send a postcard like this !
Just Married
DING-DONG
NATSUKI, CAN YOU GET THAT?
YEAH.

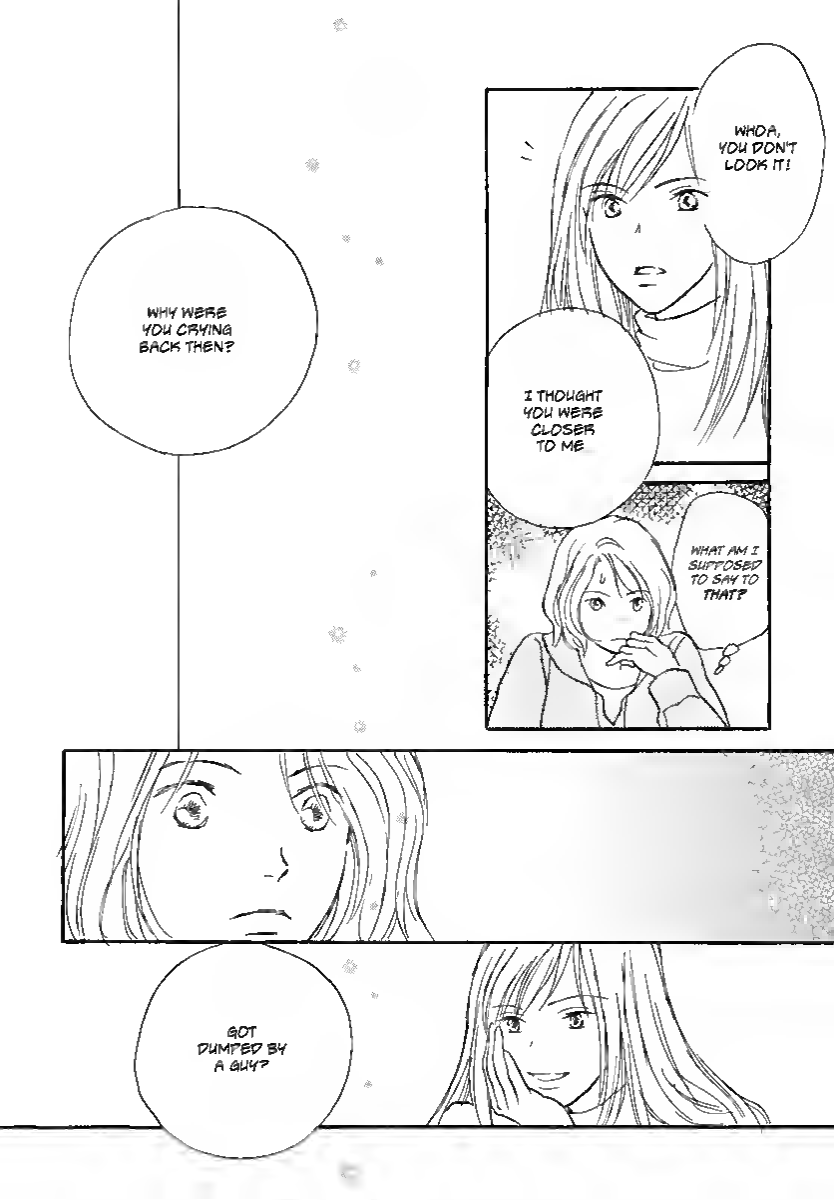

HELLO.
YES?
GWAS
HERE.
... MICHIKO-CHAN?
what are you doing here?

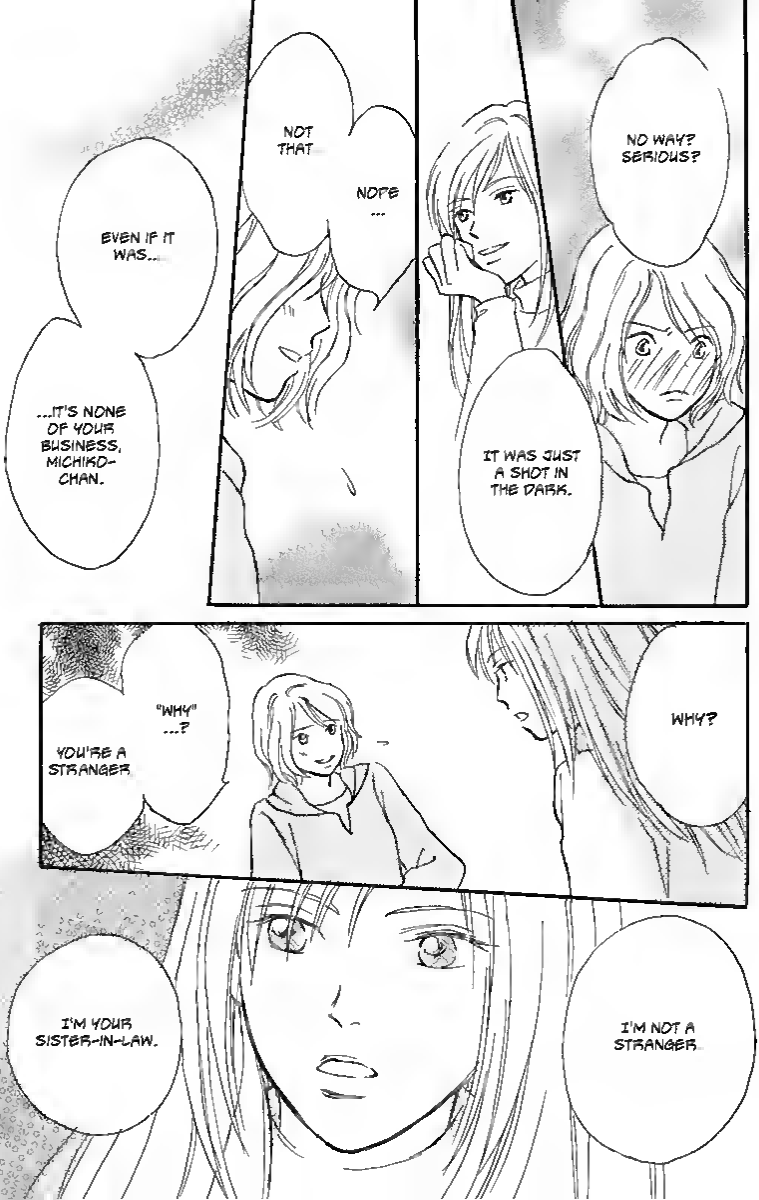

HUH?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GIVE IT BACK, YOU KNOW.
WHIP
IT'S GROSS TO HAVE A STRANGER'S THINGS IN YOUR HOUSE.
NATSUKI ?
WHO IS IT?
bow
OH, MICHIKO-CHAN!

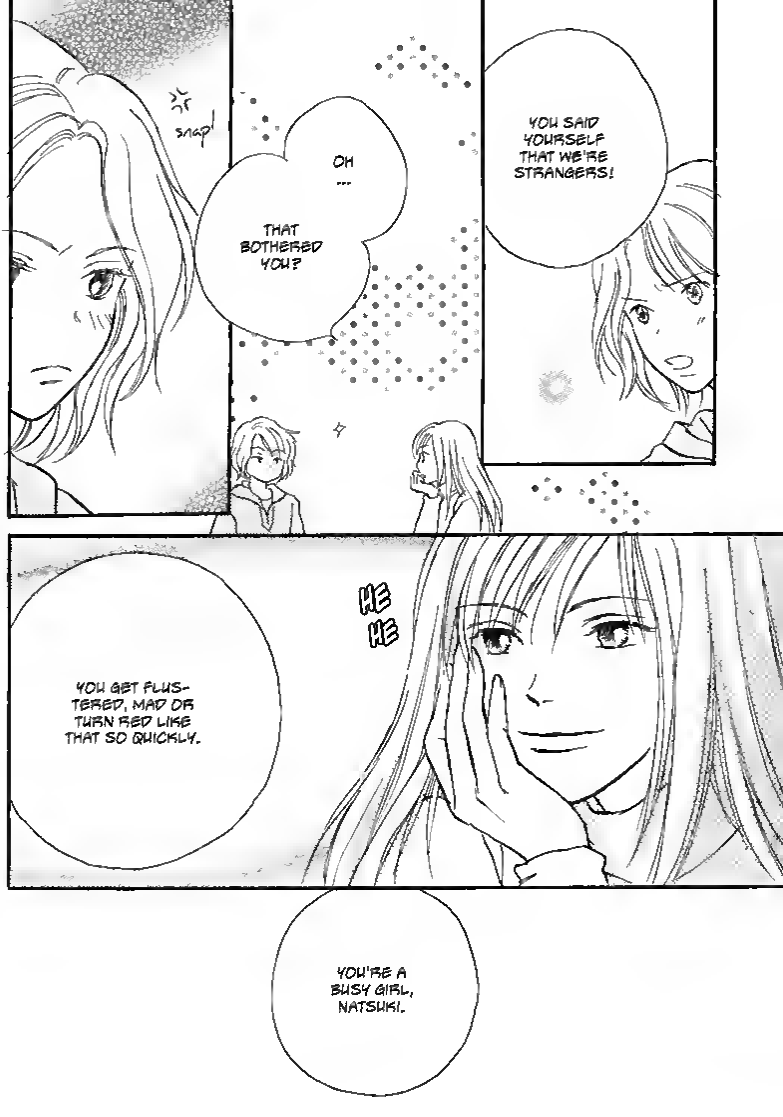
I JUST CAME BY TO RETURN THE UMBRELLA I BORROWED FROM NATSUKI-SAN.
?
UMBRELLA ?
HEY NATSUKI, HAVE MICHIKO-CHAN COME IN
GOODNESS, WELL THANK YOU FOR GOING TO ALL THE TROUBLE.
Gasss ?
Please excuse me.
I'M GOING TO GO BUY SOME CAKE.
... IT'S OK.
She just dropped in.
BUT WE DON'T HAVE ANY SNACKS TO GO WITH THE TEA.
DON'T BOTHER ABOUT ME.



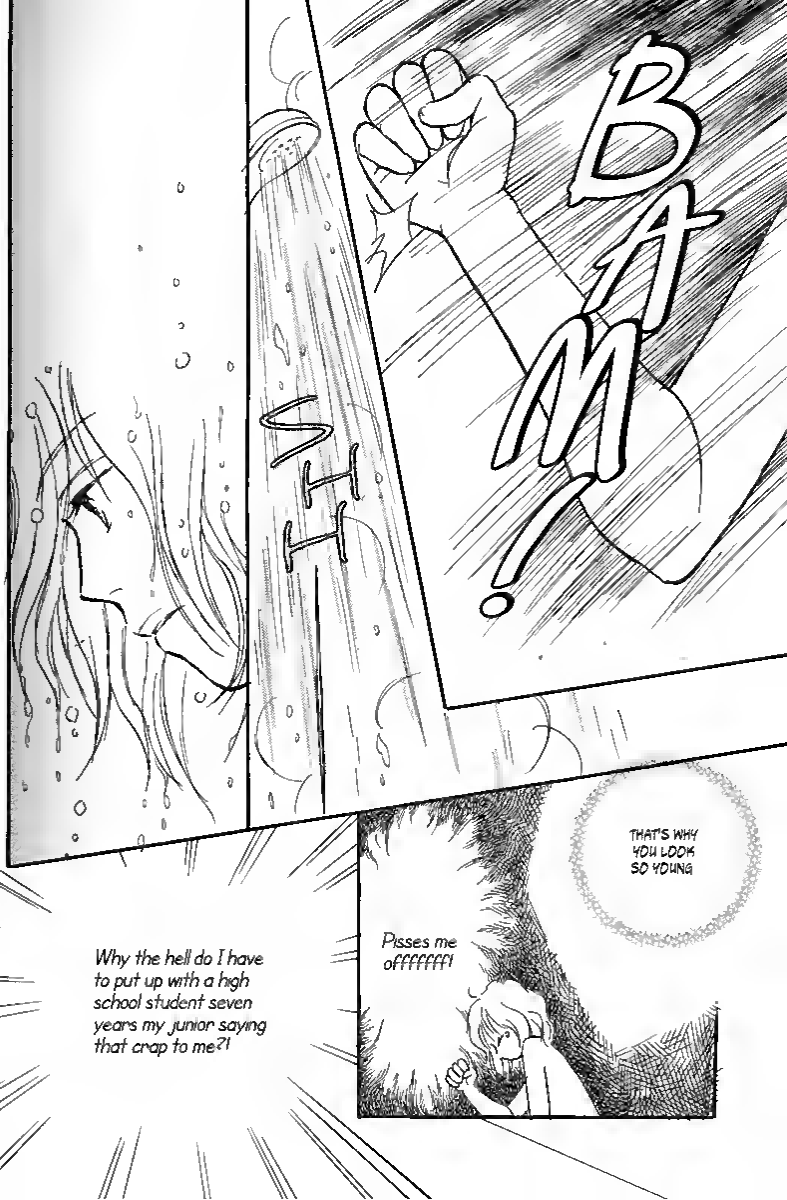
* BEFORE 2002, JAPANESE PUPILS USED TO ATTEND SCHOOL FIVE FULL WEEKDAYS AND ONE-HALF DAY ON SATURDAYS. THE FIRST CHAPTER OF COTTON WAS PUBLISHED IN DECEMBER 2000

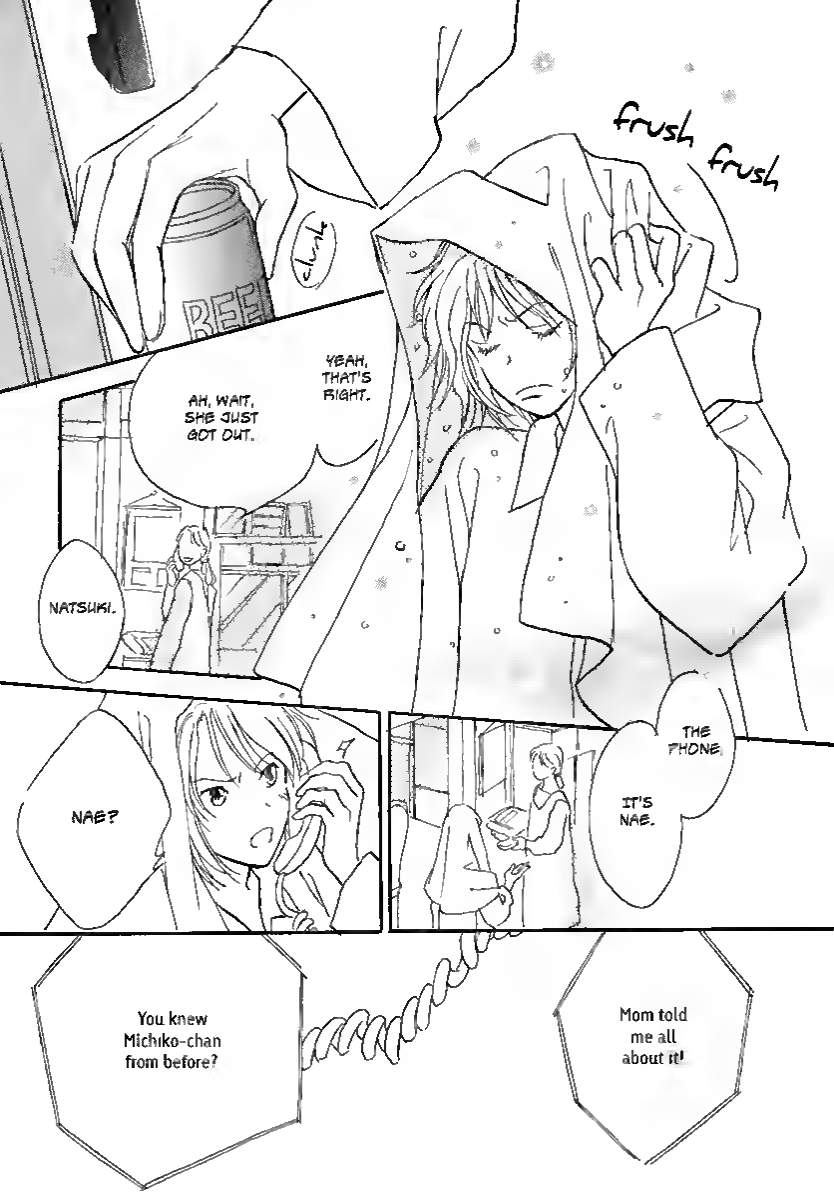

WHOA, YOU DON'T LOOK IT!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE CLOSER TO ME
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO SAY TO THAT?
WHY WERE YOU CRYING BACK THEN?
GOT DUMPED BY A GUY?

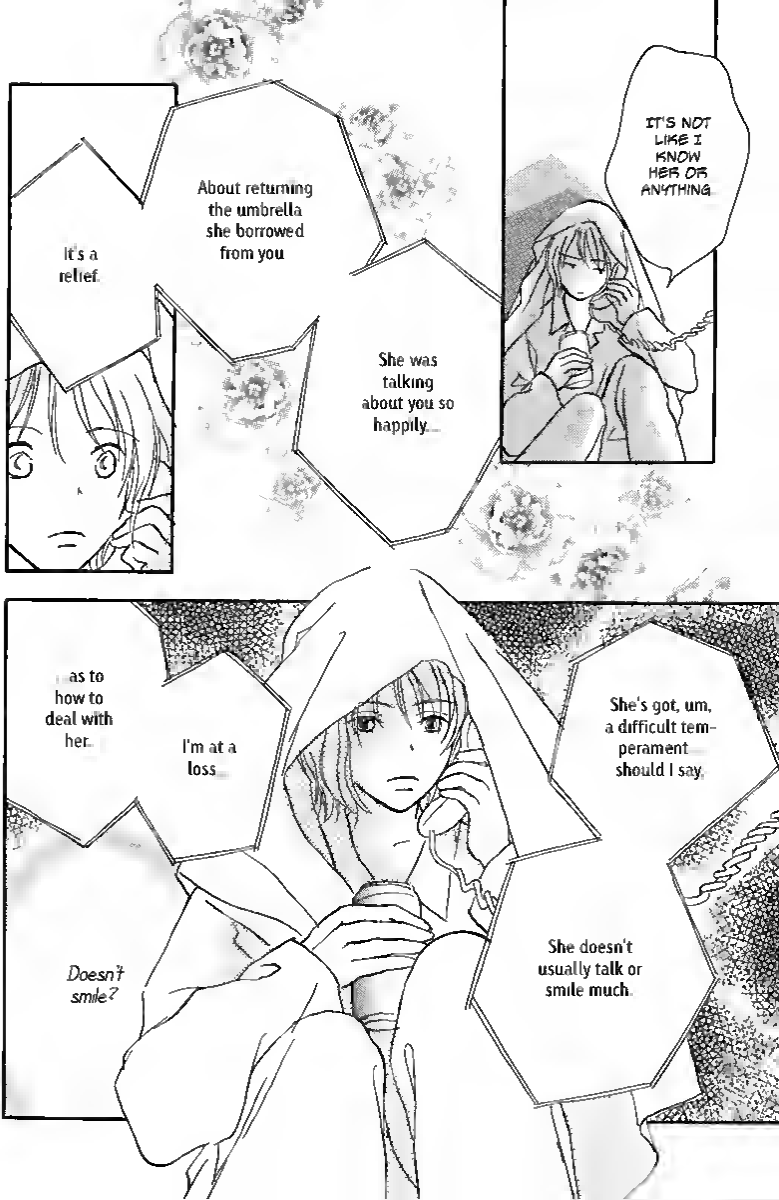

NO WAY? SERIOUS?
IT WAS JUST A SHOT IN THE DARK.
NOPE ...
NOT THAT
EVEN IF IT WAS...
...IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, MICHIKO-CHAN.
WHY?
"WHY" ...?
YOU'RE A STRANGER.
I'M NOT A STRANGER.
I'M YOUR SISTER-IN-LAW.


snap!
OH ...
THAT BOTHERED YOU?
YOU SAID YOURSELF THAT WE'RE STRANGERS!
HE HE
YOU GET FLUSTERED, MAD OR TURN RED LIKE THAT SO QUICKLY.
YOU'RE A BUSY GIRL, NATSUKI.

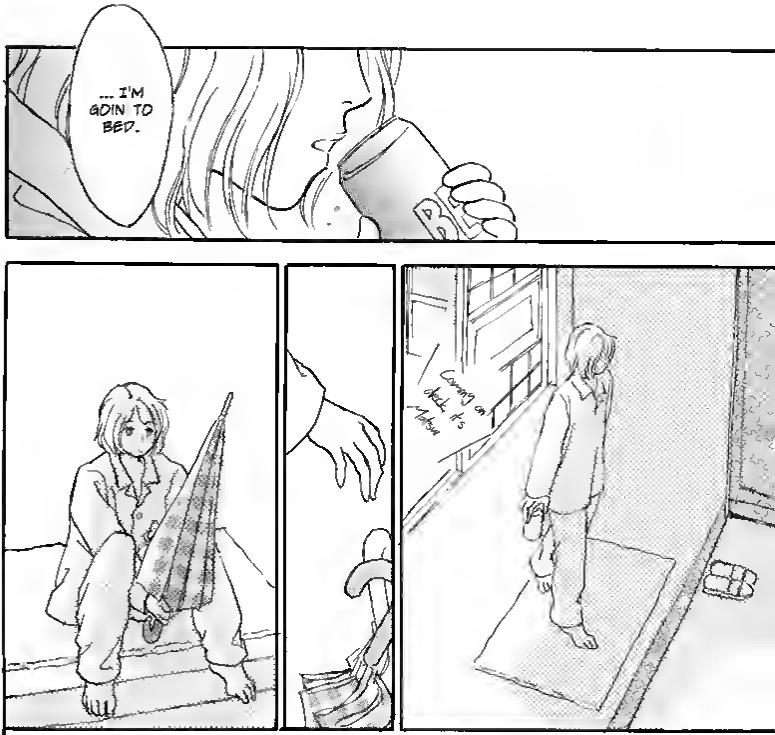
THAT'S WHY YOU LOOK SO YOUNG.
Brat...
Brat!!
Brat...
Brat...


BAM!
SHH
THAT'S WHY YOU LOOK SO YOUNG
Pisses me offffffff!
Why the hell do I have to put up with a high school student seven years my junior saying that crap to me?!

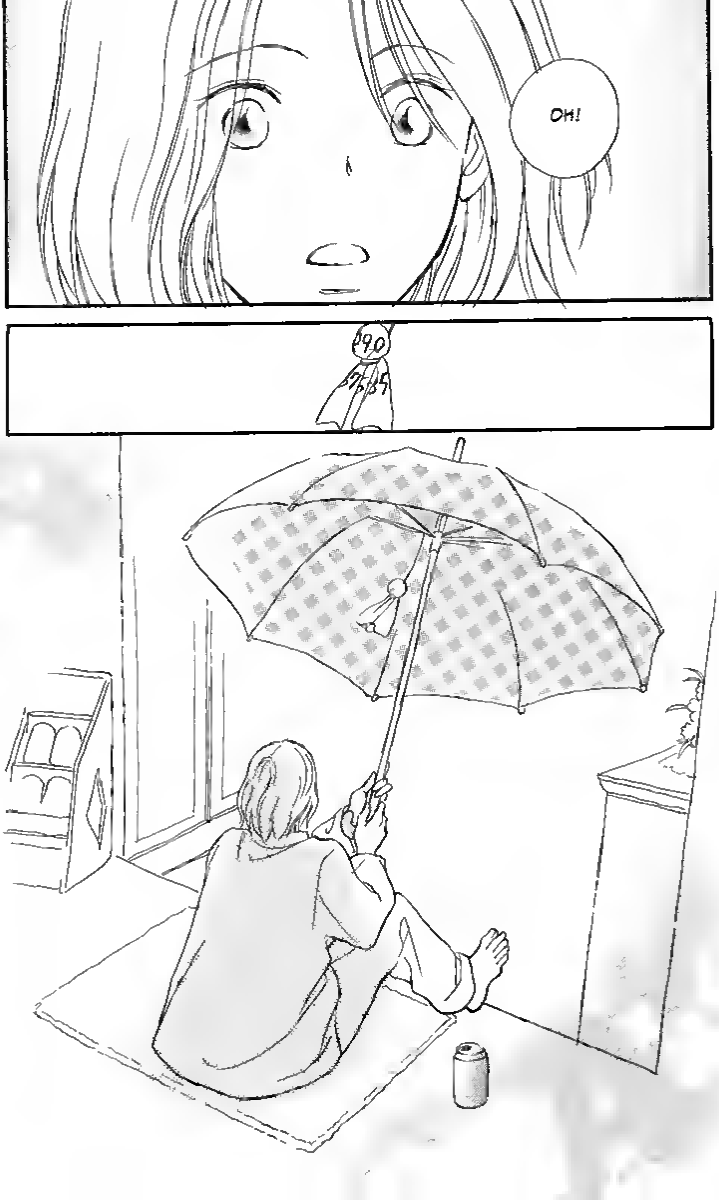

frush frush
clunk
BEE
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.
AH, WAIT, SHE JUST GOT OUT.
NATSUKI.
NAE?
THE PHONE.
IT'S NAE.
You knew Michiko-chan from before?
Mom told me all about it!


IT'S NOT LIKE I KNOW HER OR ANYTHING
About returning the umbrella she borrowed from you
It's a relief.
She was talking about you so happily...
She's got, um, a difficult temperament should I say.
I'm at a loss...
...as to how to deal with her.
She doesn't usually talk or smile much.
Doesn't smile?

So I was surprised today!
She almost never talks about...
...things at school or about her friends
Certainly that's more of a smirk than a smile.
Hmm... well
I wonder if the two of you are suited to each other
STOP IT.
Natsuki... I think...
...you could be someone that Michiko-chan can really talk to

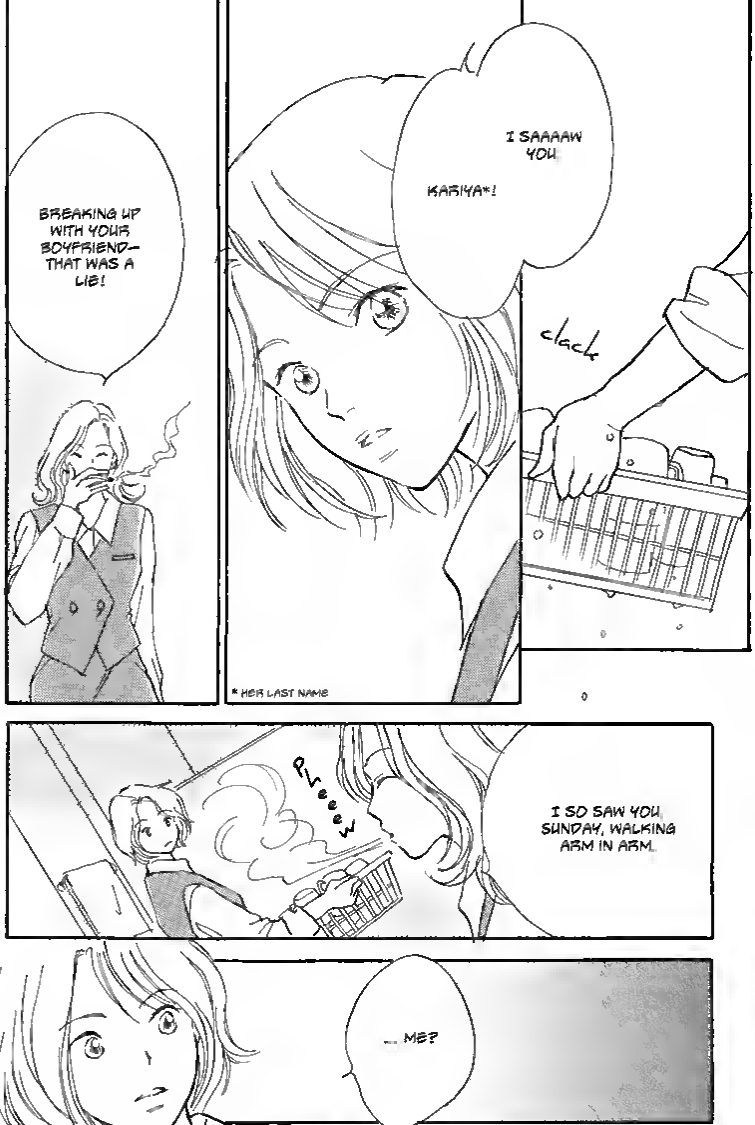


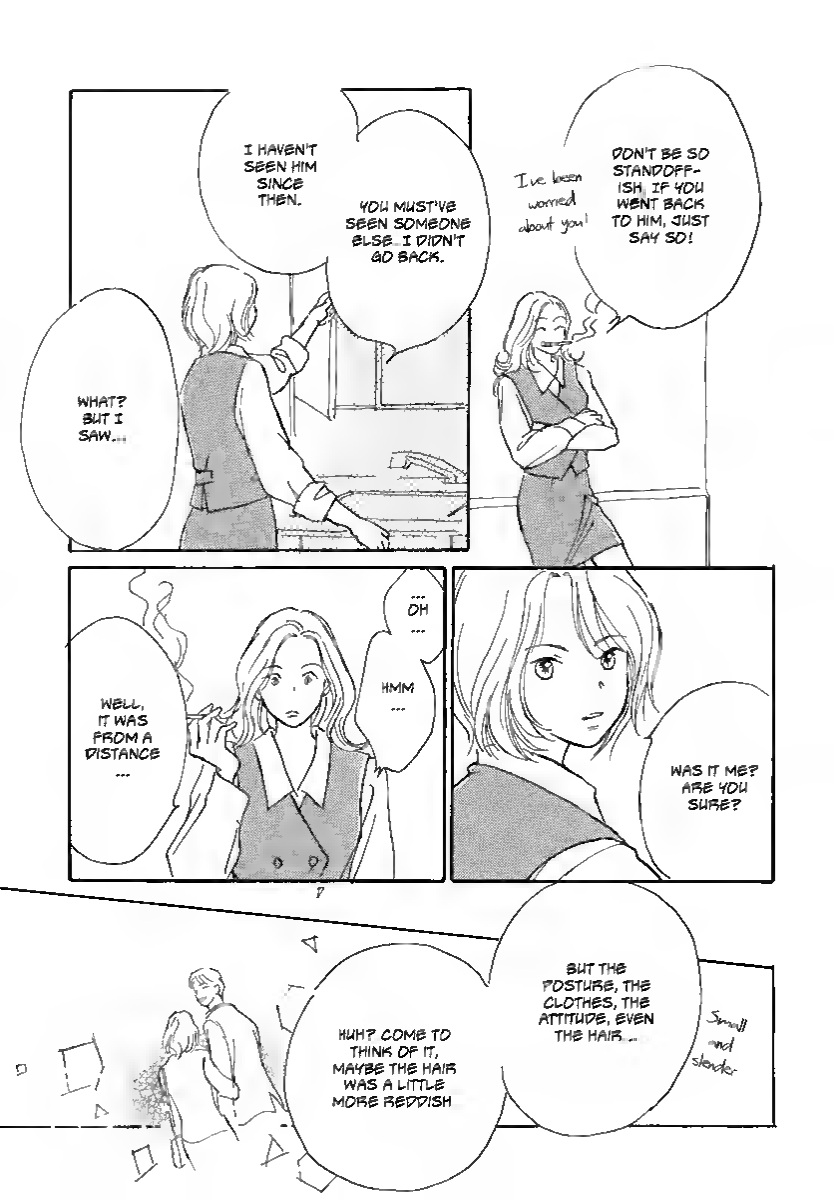
FWOOM!


OH!

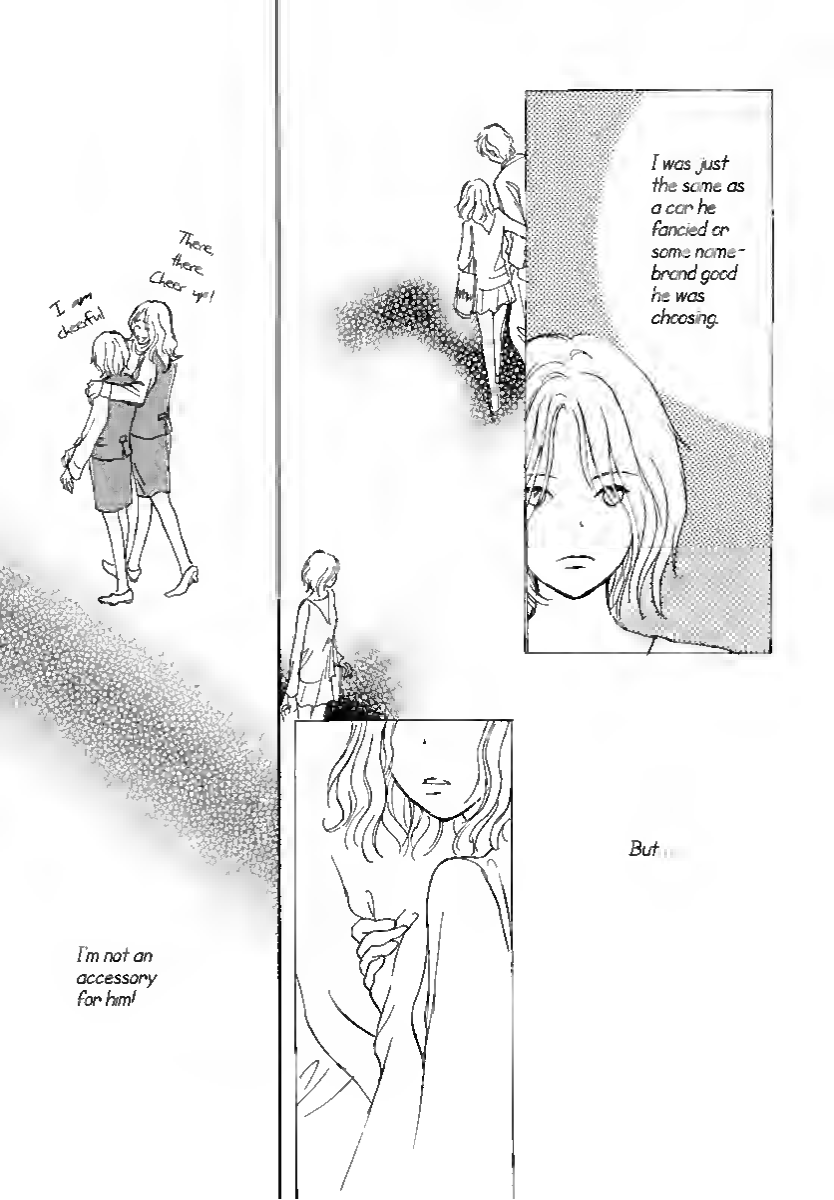
About 164-5 cm
Not so tall
Established as the beautiful girl
I can't draw beautiful girls very well
150 cm
Or maybe not quite that
Small and slender
Baby-faced

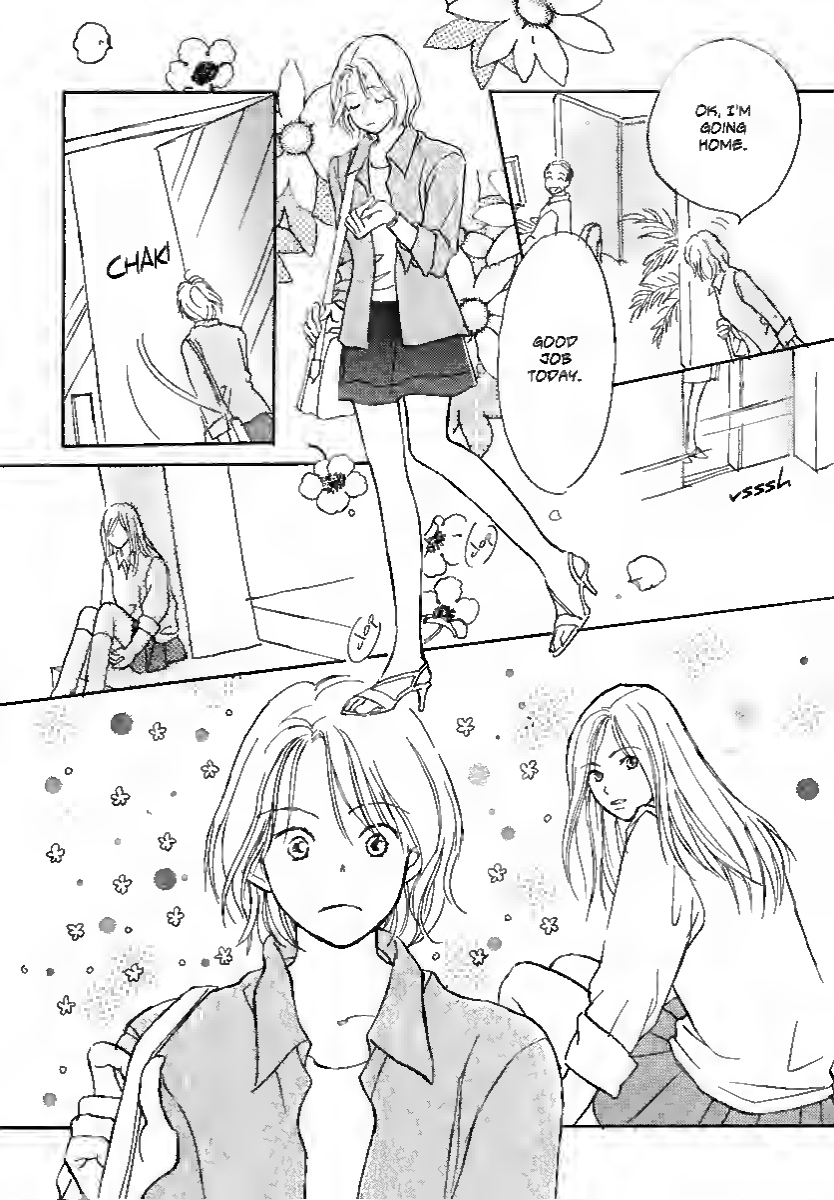
Cotton 2

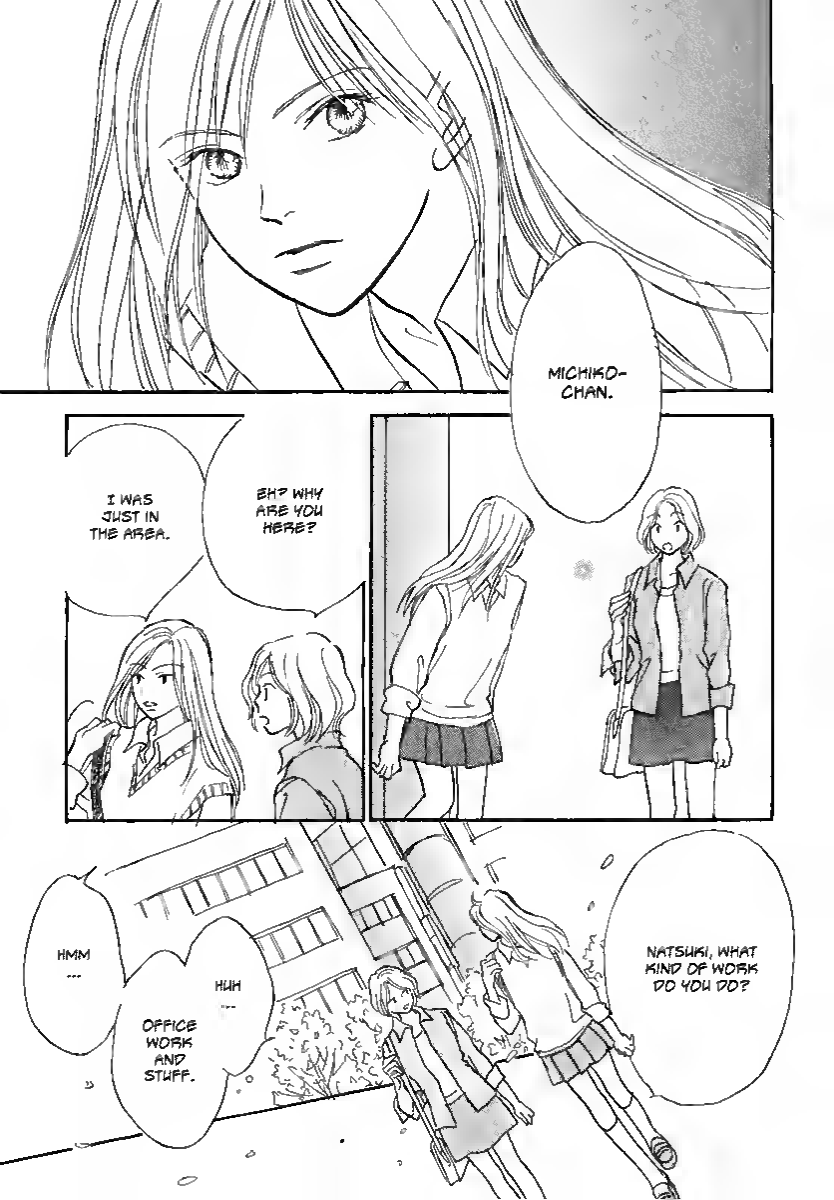

BREAKING UP WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND— THAT WAS A LIE!
I SAAAAW YOU
KARIYA*!
clack
* HER LAST NAME
PLEEEW
I SO SAW YOU SUNDAY, WALKING ARM IN ARM.
... ME?

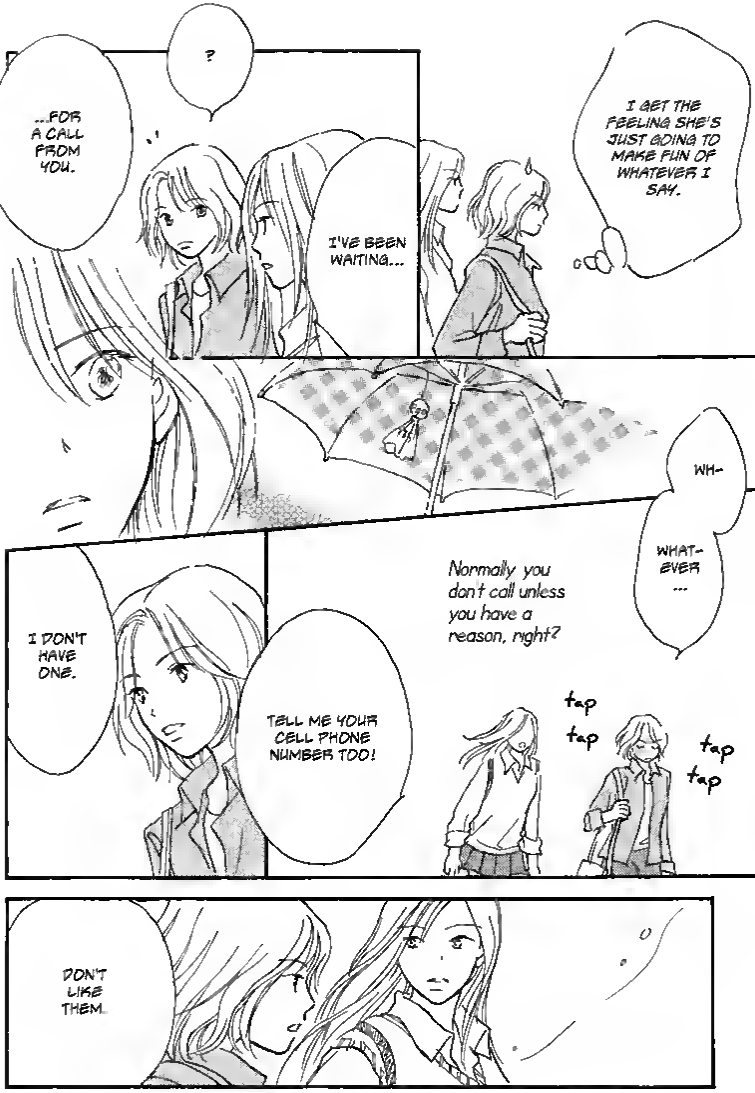

I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE THEN.
YOU MUST'VE SEEN SOMEONE ELSE. I DIDN'T GO BACK.
WHAT? BUT I SAW...
I've been worried about you!
DON'T BE SO STANDOFF-ISH. IF YOU WENT BACK TO HIM, JUST SAY SO!
... OH ...
HMM ...
WELL, IT WAS FROM A DISTANCE ...
WAS IT ME? ARE YOU SURE?
HUH? COME TO THINK OF IT, MAYBE THE HAIR WAS A LITTLE MORE REDDISH
BUT THE POSTURE, THE CLOTHES, THE ATTITUDE, EVEN THE HAIR...
Small and slender

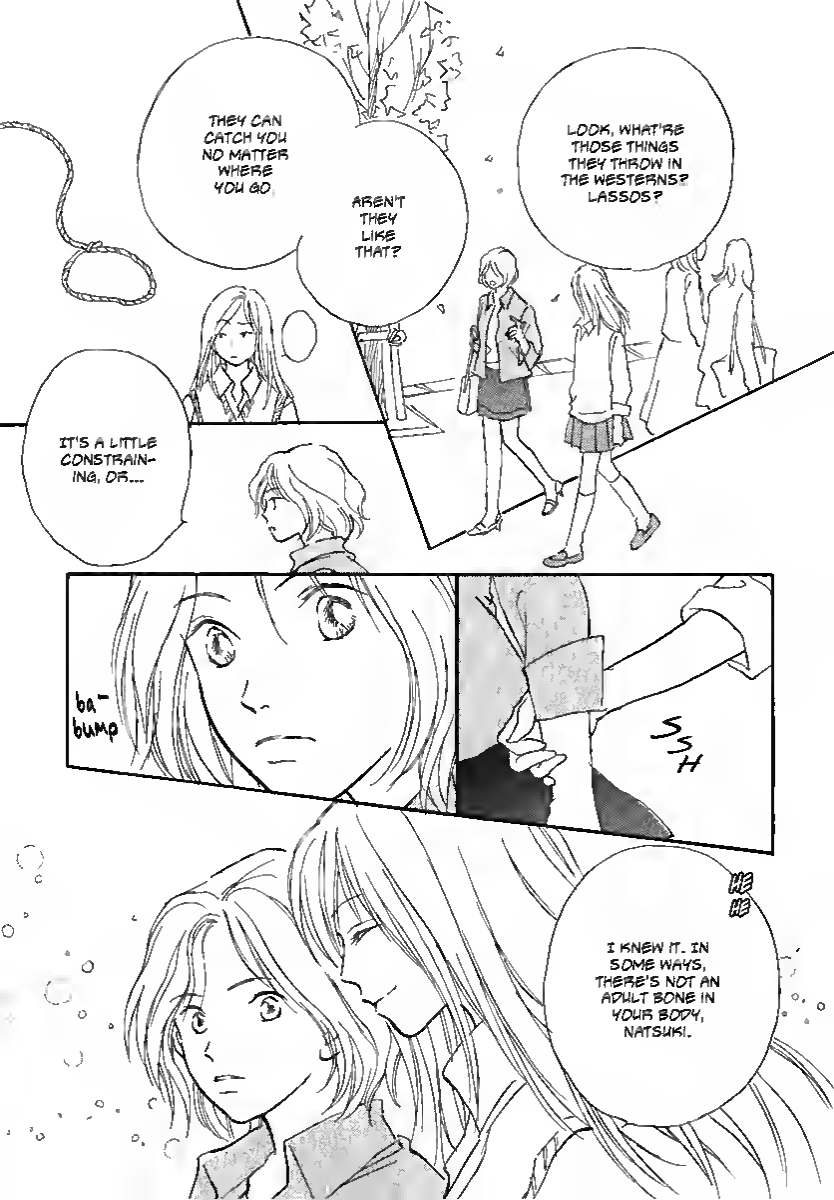
...
BUT COME ON, ARE YOU SURE IT WASN'T YOU, KARIYA?
NO WAY!
DON'T TELL ME THAT WAS WHY YOU BROKE UP AS WELL!
ISN'T THAT JUST A LITTLE...
FSSH
YEAH. HE TOTALLY SUCKS.

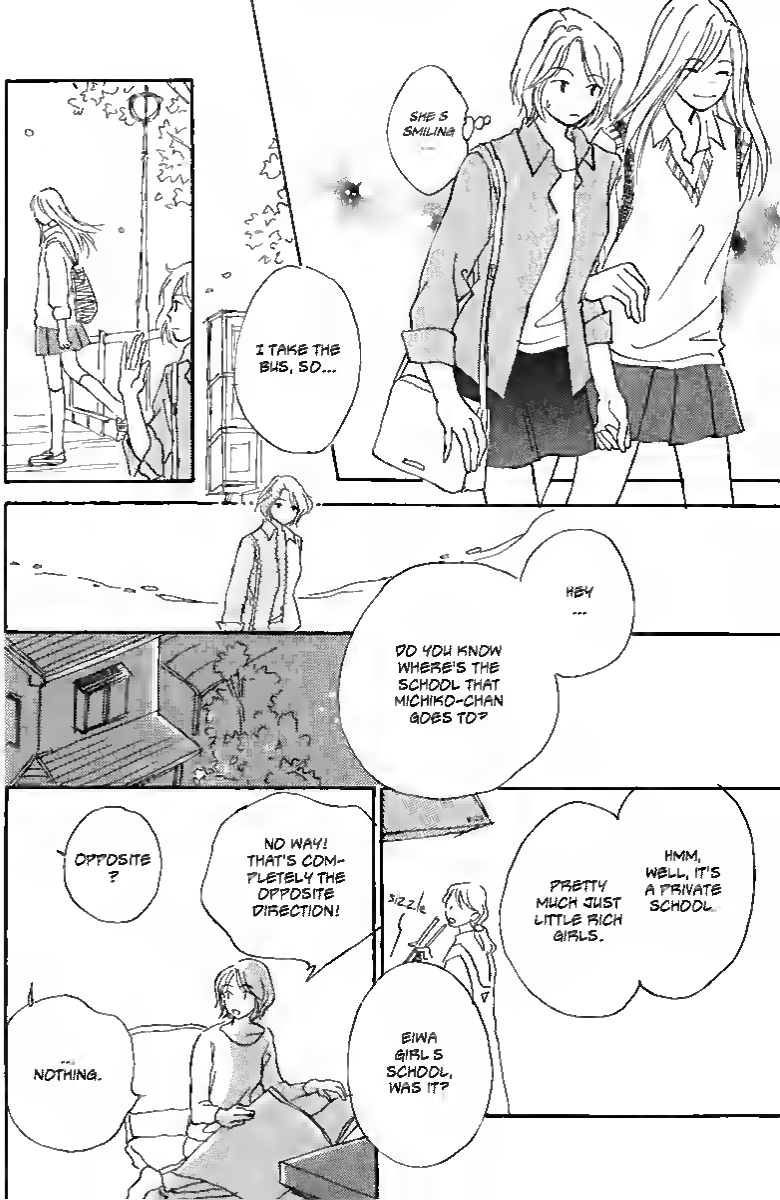

I was just the same as a car he fancied or some name-brand good he was choosing.
There, there. Cheer up!
I am cheerful
But
I'm not an accessory for him!


CHAK!
GOOD JOB TODAY.
OK, I'M GOING HOME.
vsssh


MICHIKO-CHAN.
EH? WHY ARE YOU HERE?
I WAS JUST IN THE AREA.
NATSUKI, WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?
HUH ...
OFFICE WORK AND STUFF.
HMM ...

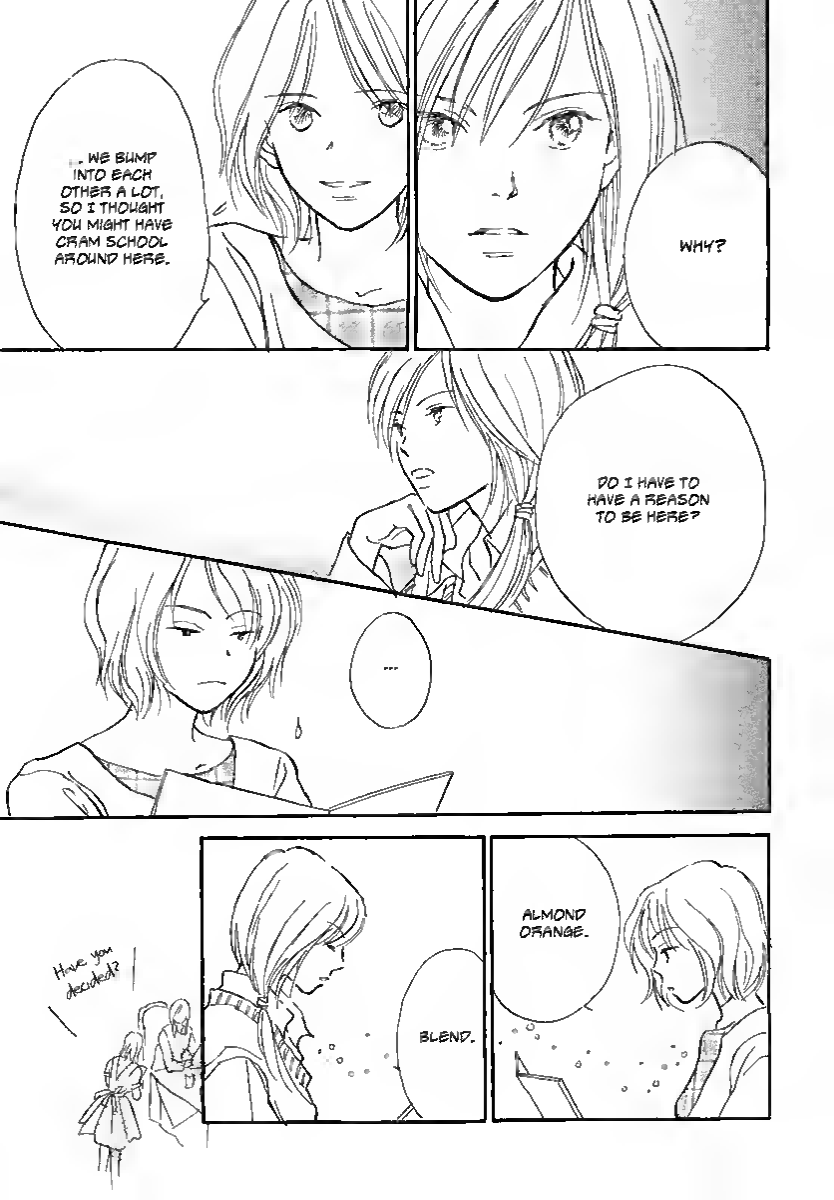

?
...FOR A CALL FROM YOU.
I'VE BEEN WAITING...
I GET THE FEELING SHE'S JUST GOING TO MAKE FUN OF WHATEVER I SAY.
WH-
WHAT-EVER ...
Normally you don't call unless you have a reason, right?
I DON'T HAVE ONE.
TELL ME YOUR CELL PHONE NUMBER TOO!
tap tap
tap tap
DON'T LIKE THEM.


THEY CAN CATCH YOU NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO
AREN'T THEY LIKE THAT?
LOOK, WHAT'RE THOSE THINGS THEY THROW IN THE WESTERNS? LASSOS?
IT'S A LITTLE CONSTRAIN-ING, OR...
ba-bump
SSH
HE HE
I KNEW IT. IN SOME WAYS, THERE'S NOT AN ADULT BONE IN YOUR BODY, NATSUKI.

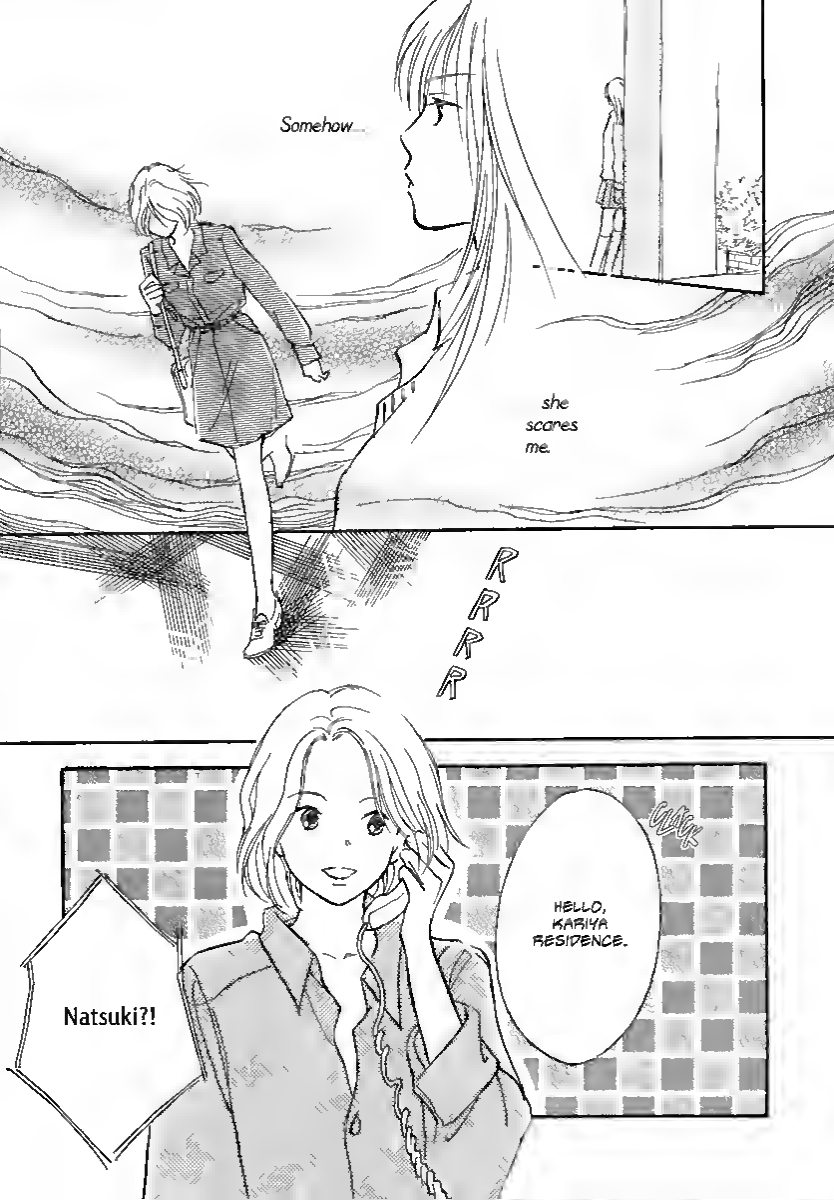

SHE'S SMILING
I TAKE THE BUS, SO...
HEY ...
DO YOU KNOW WHERE'S THE SCHOOL THAT MICHIKO-CHAN GOES TO?
HMM, WELL, IT'S A PRIVATE SCHOOL.
PRETTY MUCH JUST LITTLE RICH GIRLS.
EIWA GIRL'S SCHOOL, WAS IT?
SIZZLE
NO WAY! THAT'S COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION!
OPPOSITE ?
... NOTHING.

THAT'S A CUTE DRESS.
TODAY TOO...?
JUST HAPPENED TO BE IN THE AREA?
...
IS IT A PROBLEM ?

* ASKING TO HAVE TEA IS A CLASSIC PICK UP LINE IN JAPAN. OBVIOUSLY IT'S NOT MEANT THAT WAY HERE. BUT NICE SUBTEXT
She's got, um, a difficult temperament... should I say
It would probably be prudent...
I'M THIRSTY, SO LET'S FIND SOMEPLACE TO GET TEA*.
NOT REALLY, BUT...
...if I were to choose my words carefully
NO, I'M NOT.
MICHIKO-CHAN, ARE YOU GOING TO CRAM SCHOOL SOMEWHERE?

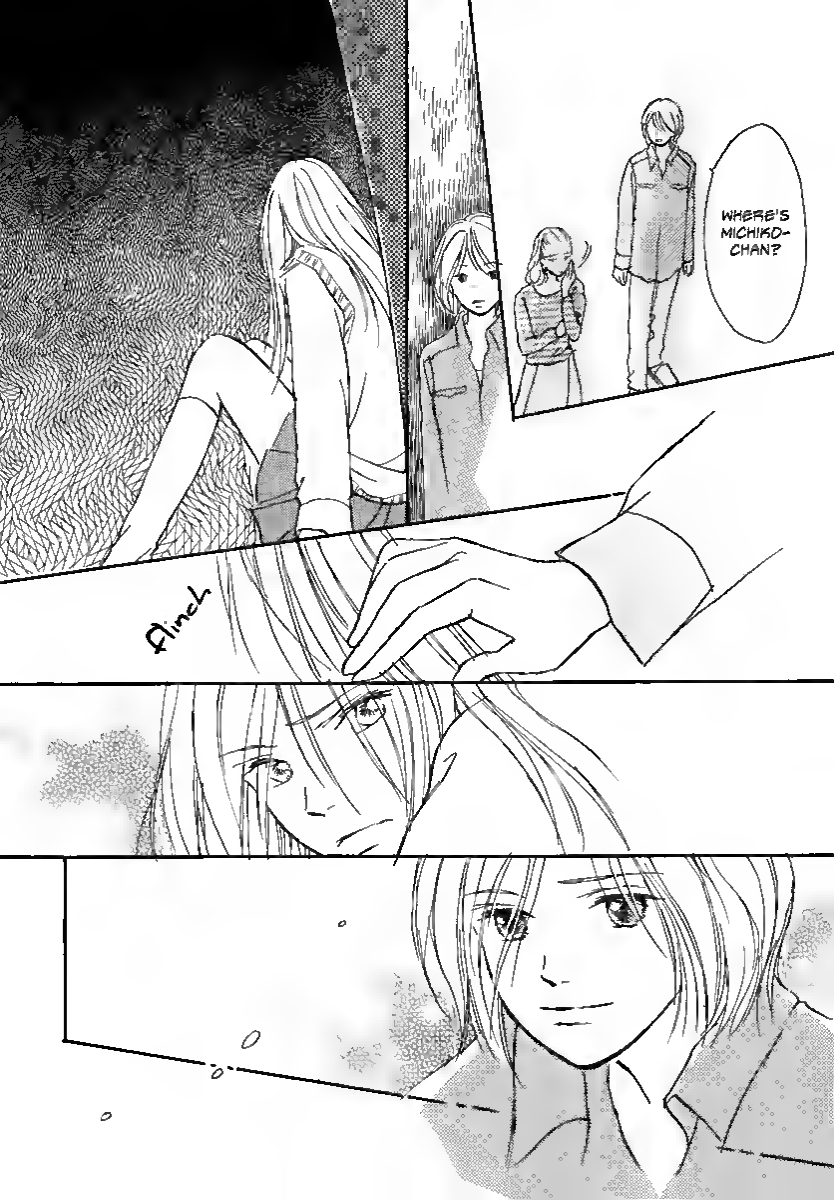

...WE BUMP INTO EACH OTHER A LOT, SO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE CRAM SCHOOL AROUND HERE.
WHY?
DO I HAVE TO HAVE A REASON TO BE HERE?
...
Have you decided?
BLEND.
ALMOND ORANGE.

It might be strange to take a high school girl so seriously, but...
THAT GIRL'S HERE AGAIN.
YOUR YOUNGER SISTER? THE TWO OF YOU ARE CLOSE, HUH?
You went home together the other night too, right?
SHE'S WAITING FOR YOU, KARIYA-SAN. THAT'S CUTE.
Aww!
You're mistaken!
I'M BEING STALKED!
Rear door

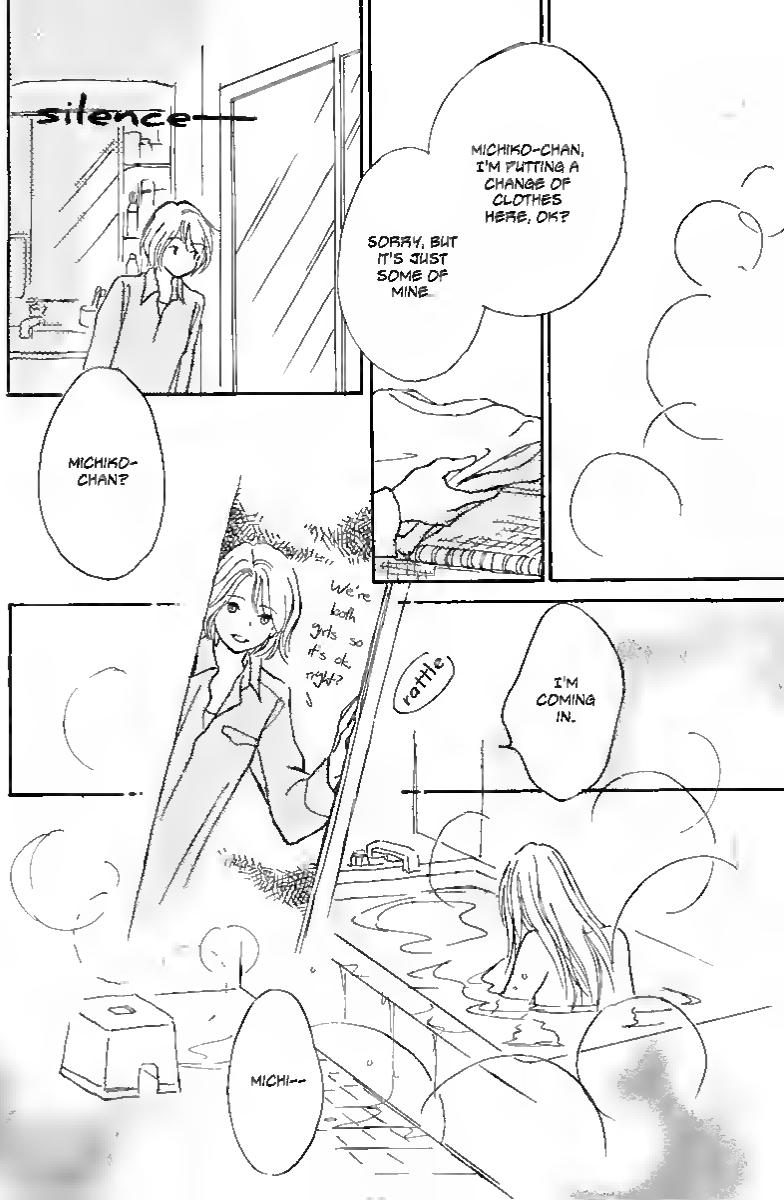

Somehow...
she scares me.
RRRR
Natsuki?!
HELLO, KARIYA RESIDENCE.
GULP

Can you come over right away?
Michiko-chan's--
Aaah, Natsuki, you've got to help me!
NAE?
WHAT? NOW?
RIGHT NOW?
Please! If it's you Natsuki, maybe
If it's you, certainly she'll--
crash
klash
Ba-bump

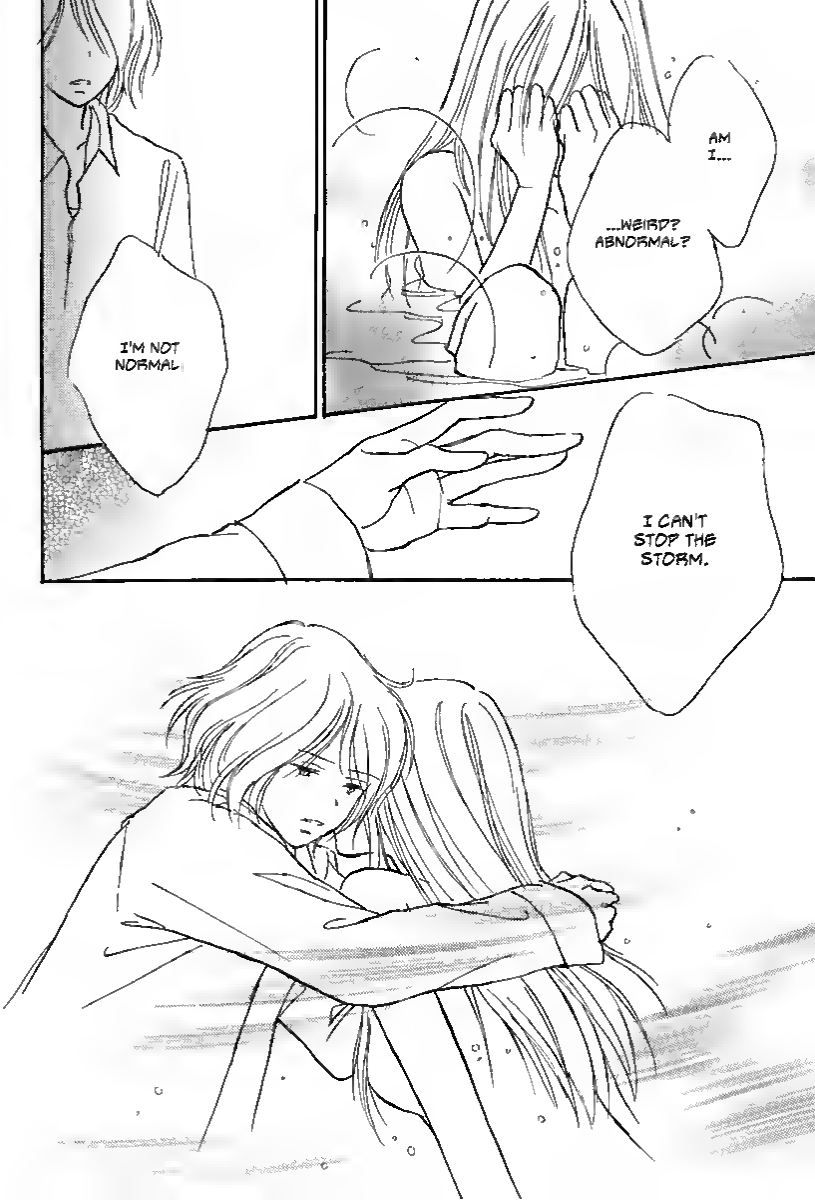
STAM
I'M SORRY, NATSUKI-SAN, AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT...
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
NAE
!
krak

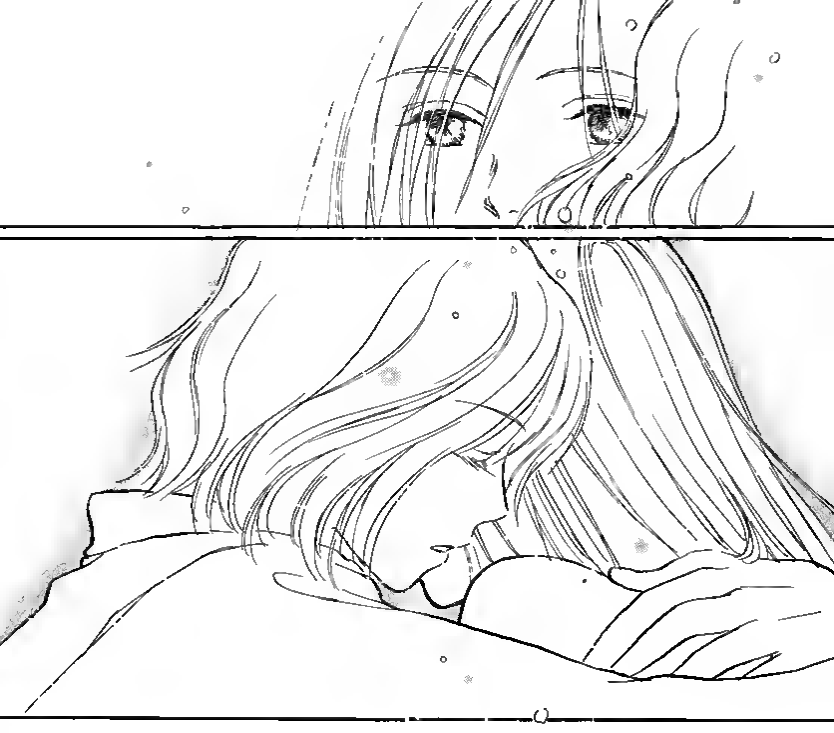

WHERE'S MICHISO-CHAN?
Aimee

THANK YOU FOR TAKING CARE OF THIS.
shiver
shiver
press
MOM, CAN YOU RUN THE BATH?
NATSUKI ...


silence
MICHIKO-CHAN, I'M PUTTING A CHANGE OF CLOTHES HERE, OK?
SORRY, BUT IT'S JUST SOME OF MINE.
MICHIKO-CHAN?
We're both girls so it's ok, right?
rattle
I'M COMING IN.
MICHI--

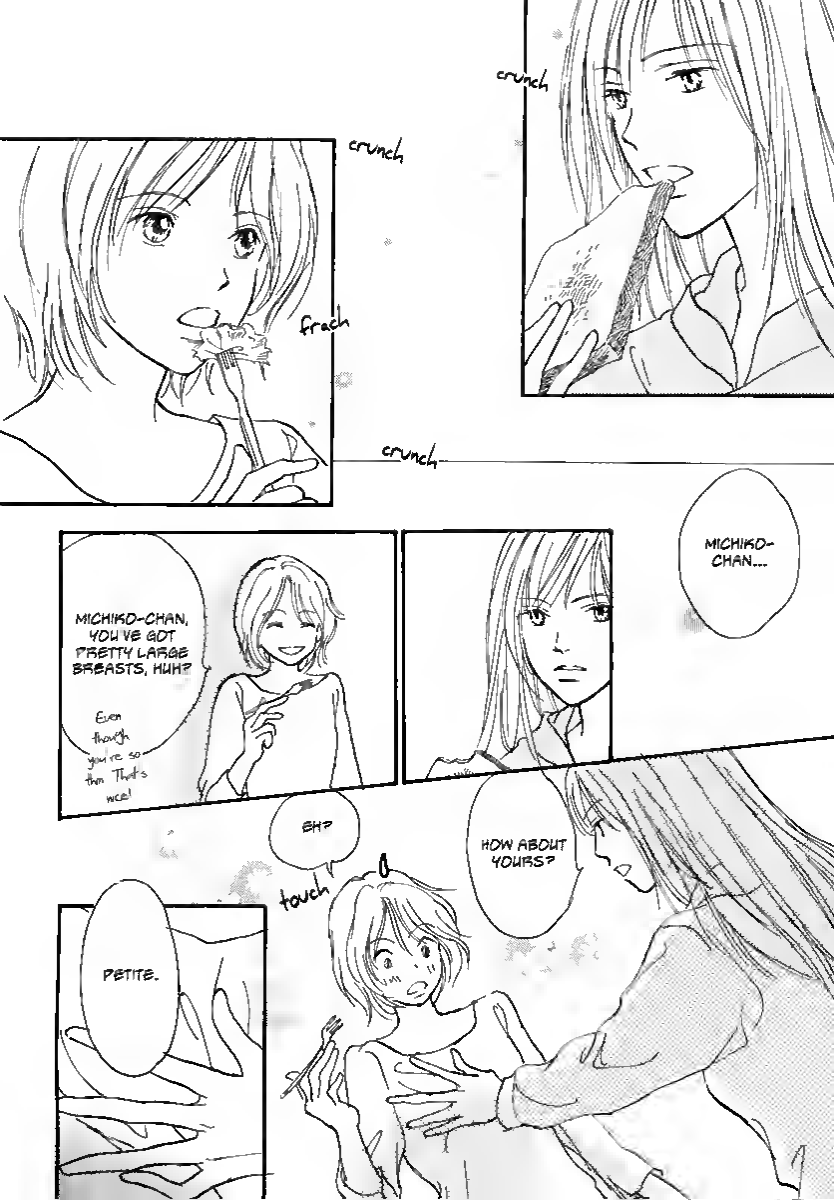
RIGHT HERE...
THERE'S A STORM...
...THAT INHABITS ME.
IT'S RAGING EVEN NOW...
BLOWING ME APART.
WHY...

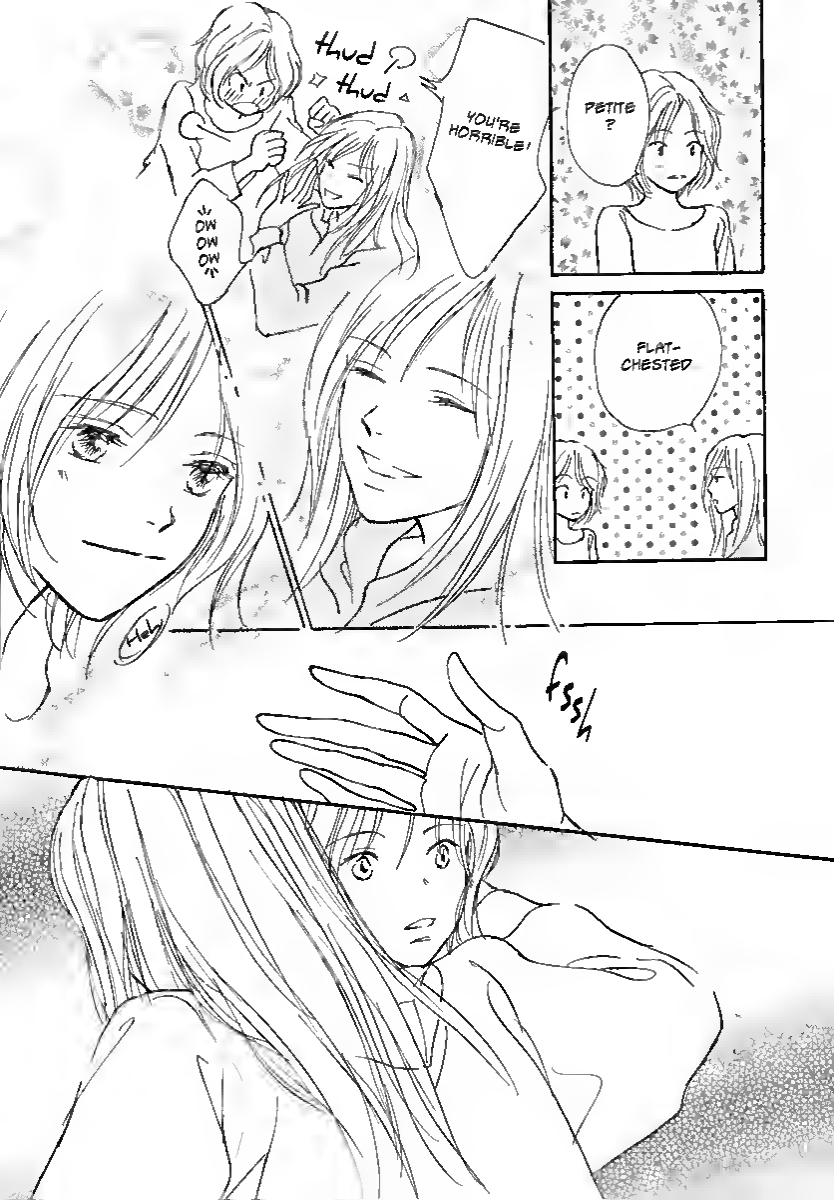

I'M NOT NORMAL
AM I....
...WEIRD? ABNORMAL?
I CAN'T STOP THE STORM.



Cotton 3

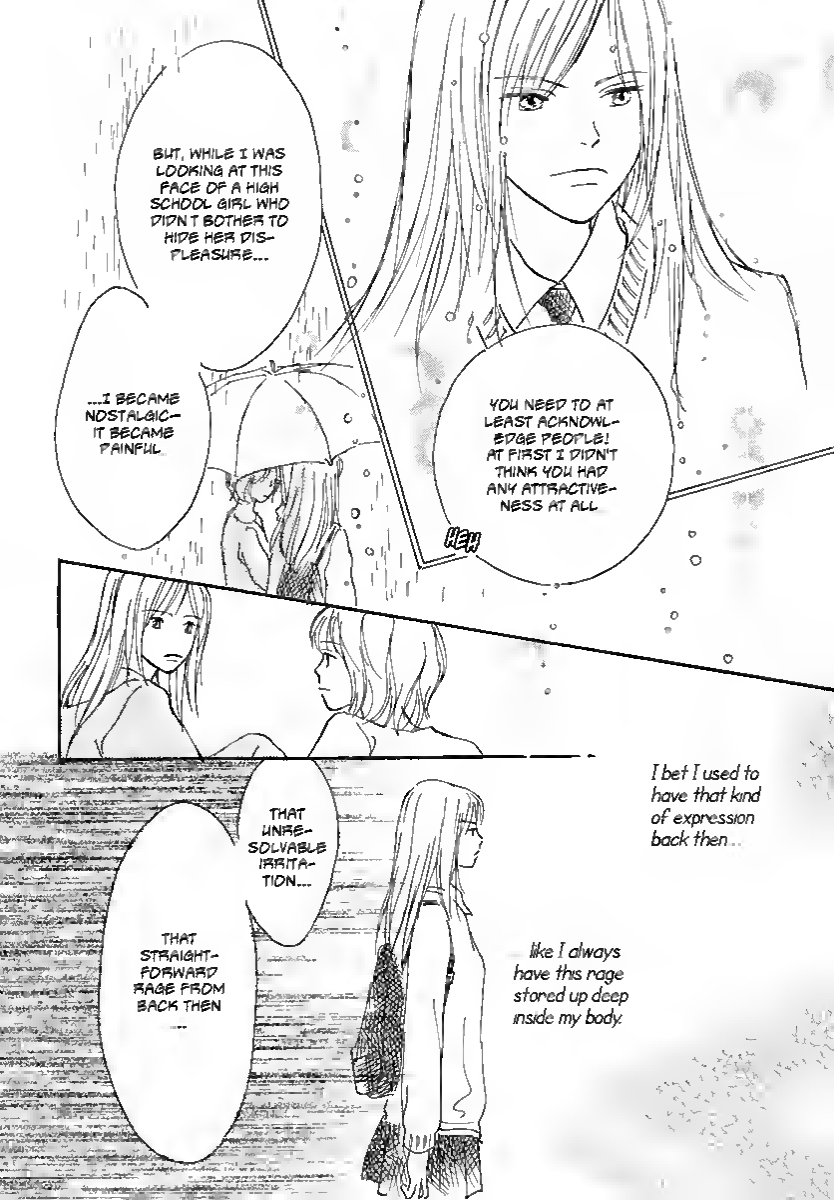
MORNING.
AREN'T YOU HUNGRY?
I'VE ONLY GOT SIMPLE-TO-MAKE STUFF, THOUGH.
I THOUGHT WE COULD EAT BREAKFAST TOGETHER.
BUT IT'S ALREADY NOON.

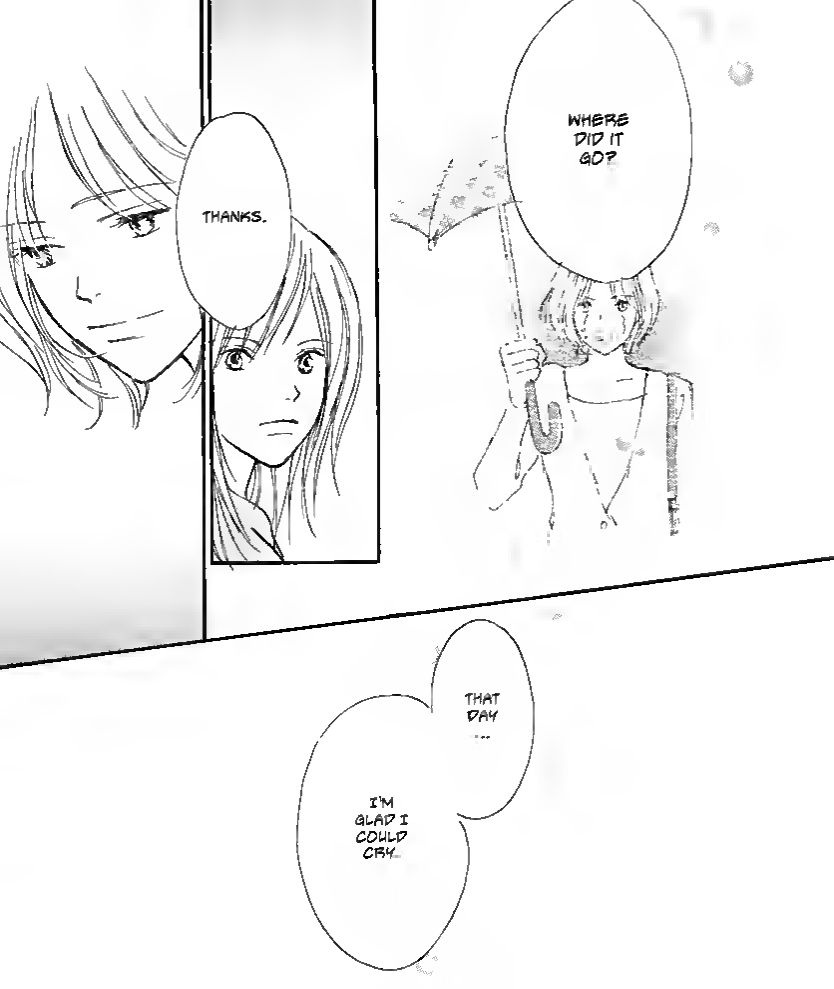

crunch
crunch
crunch
crunch
MICHIKO-CHAN....
MICHIKO-CHAN, YOU'VE GOT PRETTY LARGE BREASTS, HUH?
Even though you're so thin. That's nice!
EH?
touch
HOW ABOUT YOURS?
PETITE.

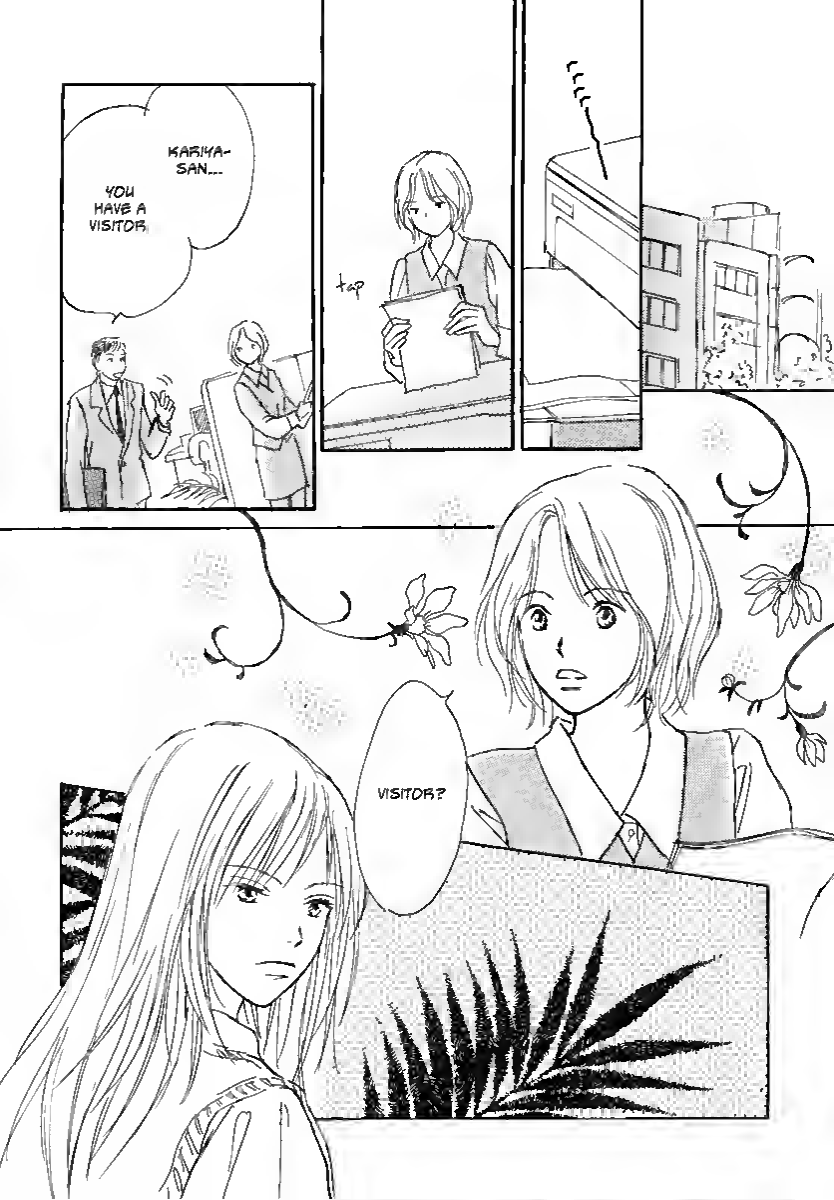

thud ?
thud
YOU'RE HORRIBLE!
OW OW OW
PETITE ?
FLAT-CHESTED
fsss/

SOMETIMES
...
I'M DROWNED IN LONELINESS
Press
EVEN WITH TWO PEOPLE
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU ARE LONELY ALL THE MORE

HUH?
WELL ...
SO THAT'S WHY YOU WERE CRYING, NATSUKI?
REALLY! NO, REALLY!
THAT WAS BECAUSE YOU GLARED AT ME WITH THAT SCARY FACE.
THAT ASSHOLE ...
IF I FOUND HIS HEART FORGOTTEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SAHARA...
...I WOULDN'T WASTE A SINGLE DROP OF WATER ON IT.
BUT ANYWAY ...
At that time...


BUT, WHILE I WAS LOOKING AT THIS FACE OF A HIGH SCHOOL GIRL WHO DIDN'T BOTHER TO HIDE HER DISPLEASURE...
...I BECAME NOSTALGIC— IT BECAME PAINFUL
YOU NEED TO AT LEAST ACKNOWLEDGE PEOPLE! AT FIRST I DIDN'T THINK YOU HAD ANY ATTRACTIVENESS AT ALL
HAH
I bet I used to have that kind of expression back then...
THAT UNRESOLVABLE IRRITATION...
THAT STRAIGHTFORWARD RAGE FROM BACK THEN...
...like I always have this rage stored up deep inside my body.

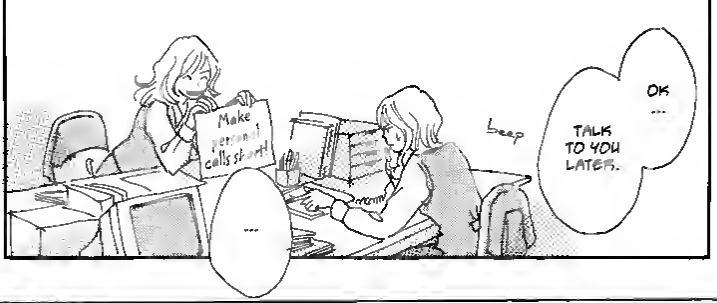

THANKS.
WHERE DID IT GO?
THAT DAY ...
I'M GLAD I COULD CRY.


KARIYA-SAN...
YOU HAVE A VISITOR.
tap
VISITOR?

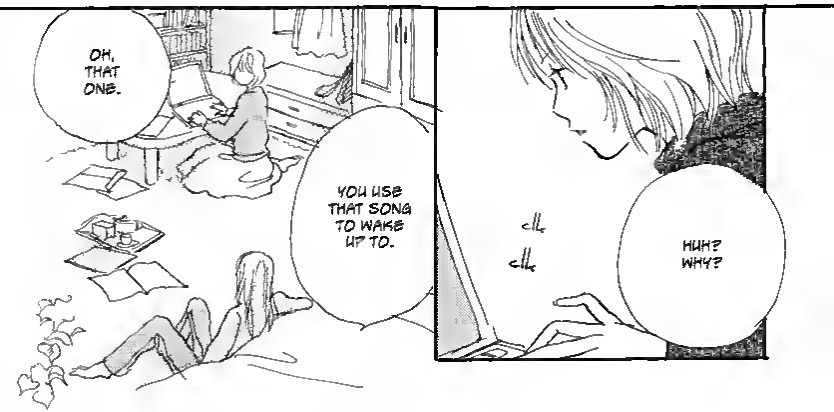
WHAT'S THIS NOW?
OH, THAT'S KARIYA-SAN'S YOUNGER SISTER, RIGHT?
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN HER CLOSE UP. SHE'S A REAL BEAUTY.
OH, THAT'S THE LECHER IN YOU, MASHIBO.
...

* THIS IS LIKELY A REFERENCE TO MIMONA FUJII'S YURI MANGA HIMITSU NO HANAZONO (LIT "THE SECRET GARDEN")
It's like I've sneaked a peek at a secret garden
GARDEN?
?
WHAT IS THIS KINKY FEELING, I WONDER?
... WEIRD. WHY SHOULD I GET ALL WORKED UP OVER THAT?
WAH!
HEY HEY ...
LET'S GO TO THAT NEW PLACE ON THE CORNER FOR LUNCH.
I DON'T WANT TO SAY.
WHAT WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
FINISHED ?
YES I'M SORRY. THANKS FOR LETTING ME TAKE THAT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS PERSONAL.
SORRY, I'VE GOT AN APPOINTMENT TODAY.
bee-deet
bee-deet

Michiko-chan left the house at her normal time today.
Yeah, I make her lunch for her everyday.
I make it at the same time I make Yoshiyuki san's.
Oh, Natsuki. Huh? Michiko-chan?
Who said anything about treating you?
Well then I'll let you treat me!
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU ABOUT THIS.
AH NO, NOTHING'S WRONG.
Is something wrong...?
Please tell them thank you for us again.
It must have been a bother for your parents, too.
OH, THAT'S OK.
Thanks for the other day. You really helped us out.

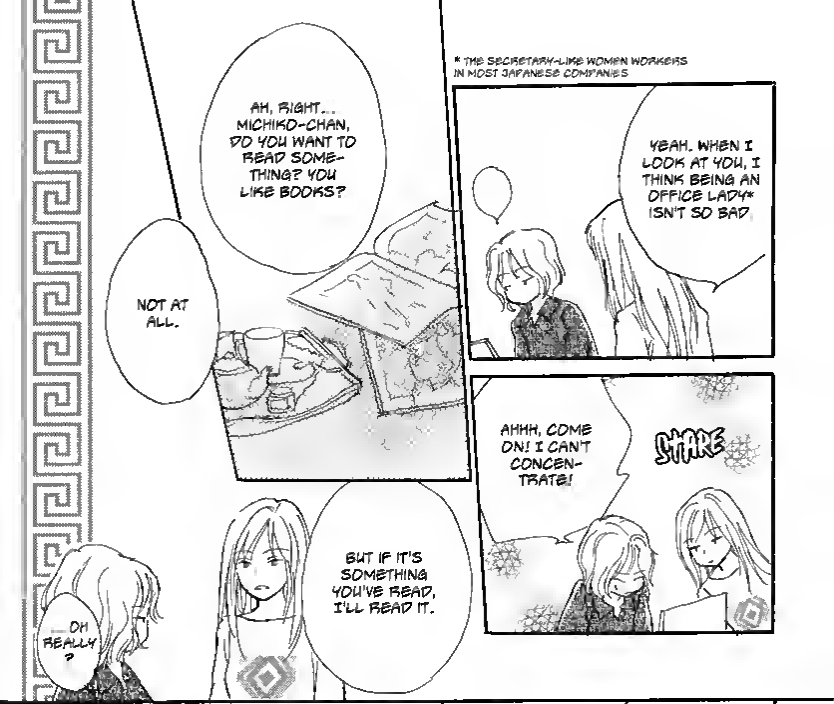

Make personal calls short!
...
Beep
OK ...
TALK TO YOU LATER.

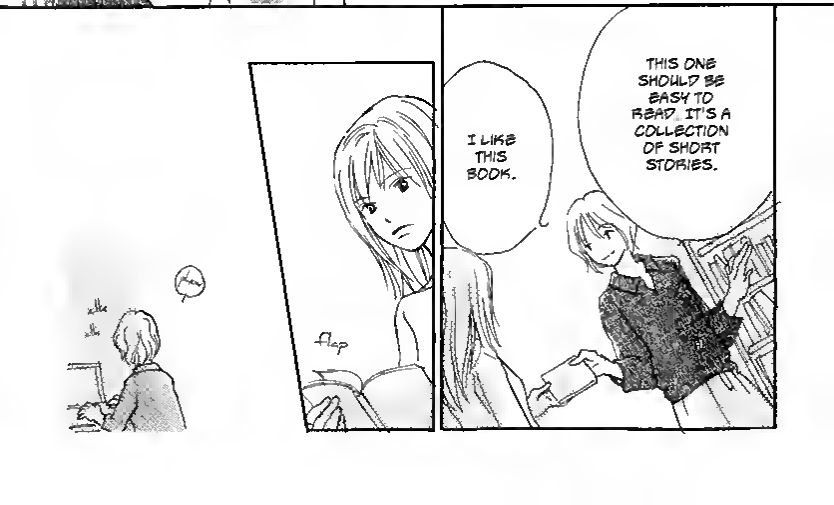
DO YOU LIKE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL?

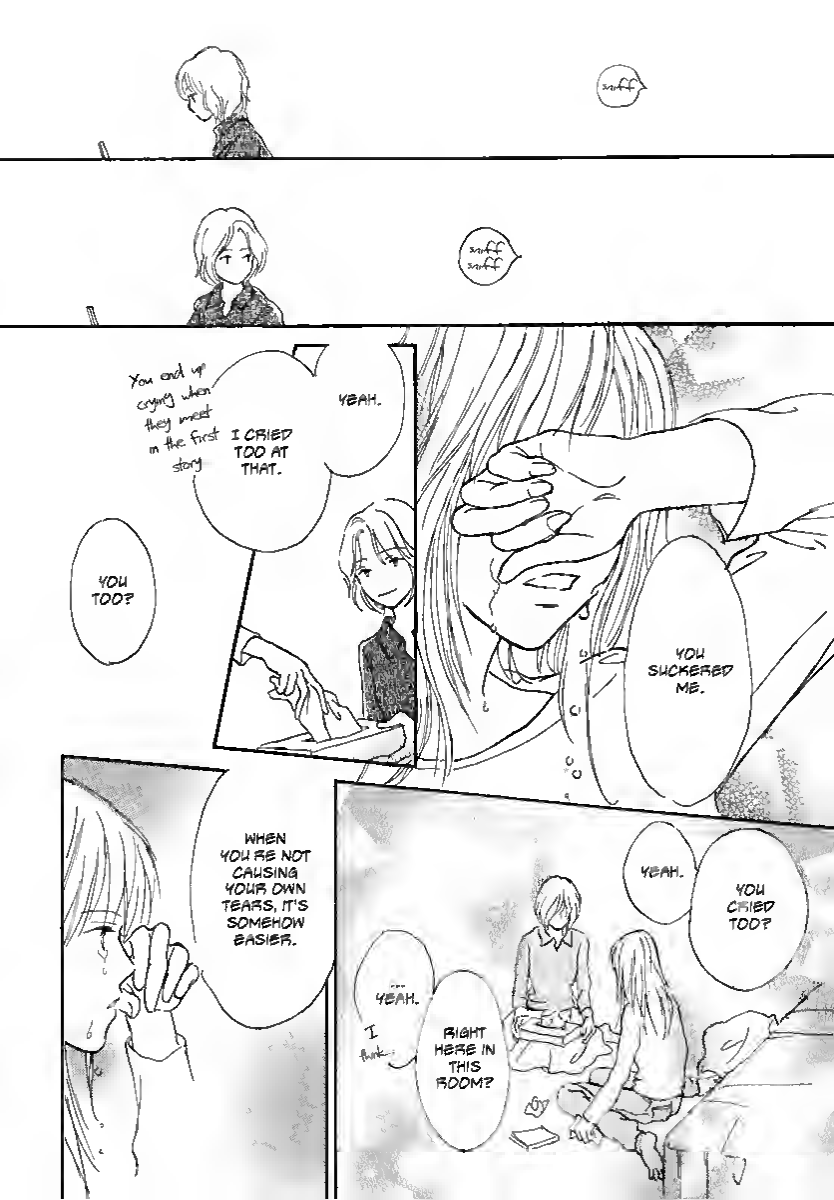

OH, THAT ONE.
YOU USE THAT SONG TO WAKE UP TO.
HUH? WHY?

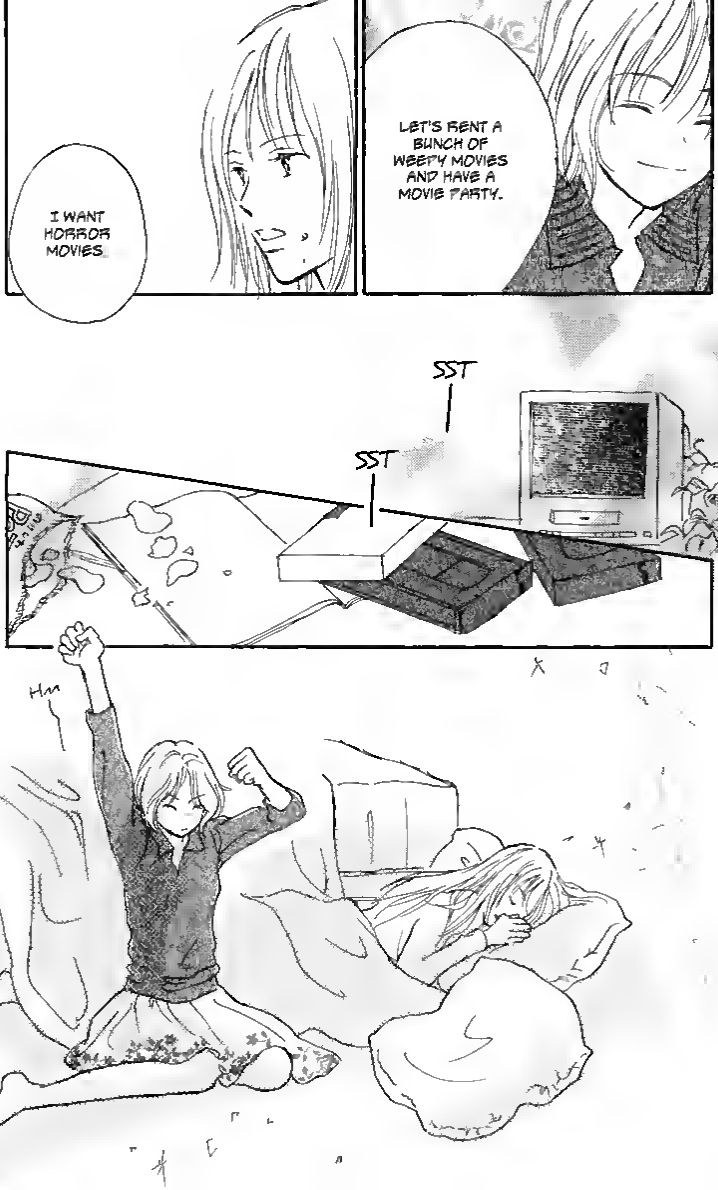
Pavlov's dog
THAT SONG WORKS THE BEST. MY BODY STARTS MOVING AS SOME SORT OF CONDITIONED RESPONSE.
YOUR BODY MOVES ...?
MY WORKPLACE USES THAT AS BACKGROUND MUSIC FOR STRETCHING.
It's just an arrange-ment though.
THEY USE 'BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER' FOR EXERCISE MUSIC?
WELL, IT'S LIKE THE MORNING STRETCHES sort of ON NHK RADIO.
THEY DO IT BEFORE WORK? EVERYONE?
YEAH. IN THEIR SUITS. THE OLD GUYS, THE YOUNG GUYS.
WEIRD ...
THEN LAUGH ABOUT IT.
HEY DON'T LOOK.

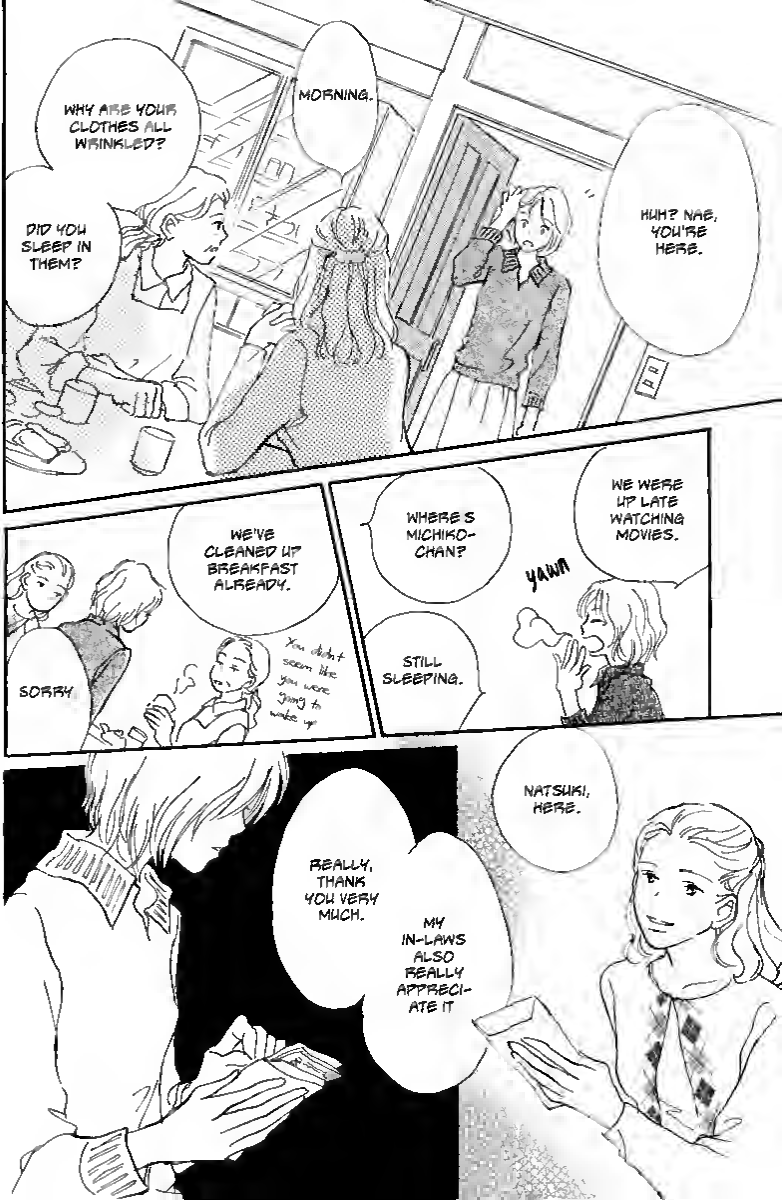
I ALWAYS HAD THE FEELING THAT I WOULDN'T LIVE TO 20.
EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE...
I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO IMAGINE WHAT I WOULD BE LIKE AS AN ADULT.
ADULTS ALWAYS ASK YOU, "WHAT'S YOUR DREAM?"
I HATE THAT.
UMM... SO ARE YOU SICK OR SOMETHING?
NOPE. HEALTHY.
THEN THE ODDS ARE PRETTY GOOD OF YOUR MAKING 20.
EXERCISES. HOMEWORK.
YOUR WORK SEEMS INTERESTING.
THEY MAKE US TURN SOMETHING IN ONCE A MONTH.
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT?

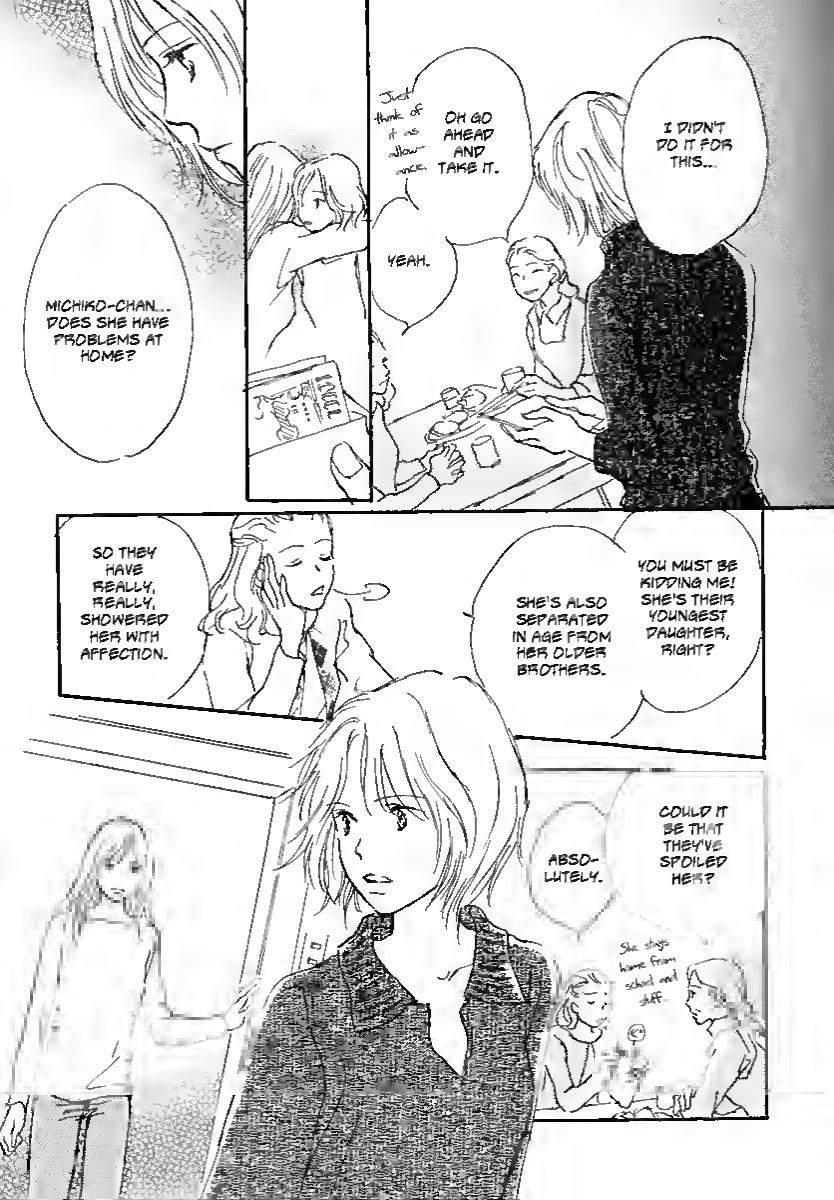

* THE SECRETARY-LIKE WOMEN WORKERS IN MOST JAPANESE COMPANIES
YEAH. WHEN I LOOK AT YOU, I THINK BEING AN OFFICE LADY* ISN'T SO BAD
AH, RIGHT... MICHIKO-CHAN, DO YOU WANT TO READ SOMETHING? YOU LIKE BOOKS?
NOT AT ALL.
AHHH, COME ON! I CAN'T CONCENTRATE!
STARE
BUT IF IT'S SOMETHING YOU'VE READ, I'LL READ IT.
OH REALLY?


THIS ONE SHOULD BE EASY TO READ. IT'S A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES.
I LIKE THIS BOOK.
flap


sniff
sniff sniff
You end up crying when they meet in the first story
I CRIED TOO AT THAT.
YEAH.
YOU TOO?
YOU SUCKERED ME.
WHEN YOU'RE NOT CAUSING YOUR OWN TEARS, IT'S SOMEHOW EASIER.
YEAH.
YOU CRIED TOO?
... YEAH. I think.
RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM?


I WANT HORROR MOVIES.
LET'S RENT A BUNCH OF WEEPY MOVIES AND HAVE A MOVIE PARTY.
SST
SST
Hm

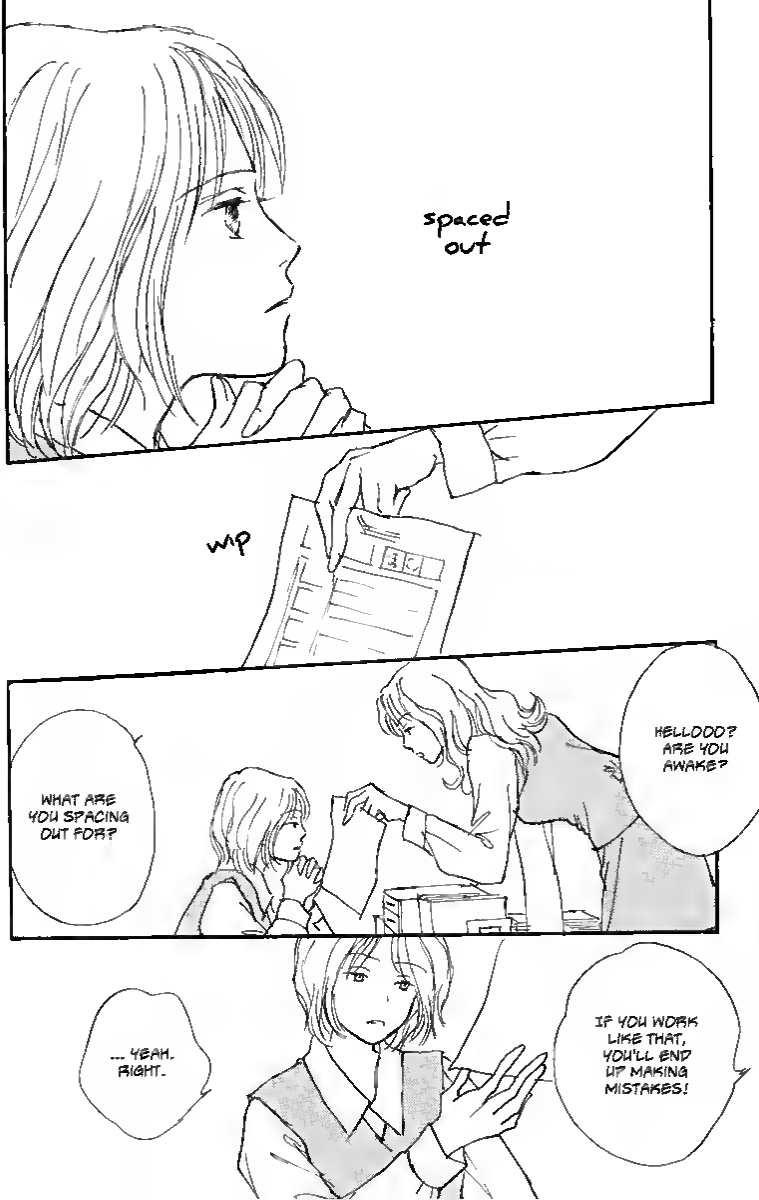

MORNING.
WHY ARE YOUR CLOTHES ALL WRINKLED?
DID YOU SLEEP IN THEM?
HUH? NAE, YOU'RE HERE.
WE WERE UP LATE WATCHING MOVIES.
YAWN
WHERE'S MICHIKO-CHAN?
STILL SLEEPING.
WE'VE CLEANED UP BREAKFAST ALREADY.
You didn't seem like you were going to wake up
SORRY.
NATSUKI, HERE.
MY IN-LAWS ALSO REALLY APPRECI-ATE IT
REALLY, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.


I DIDN'T DO IT FOR THIS...
OH GO AHEAD AND TAKE IT.
Just think of it as allowance.
YEAH.
MICHIKO-CHAN... DOES SHE HAVE PROBLEMS AT HOME?
YOU MUST BE KIDDING ME! SHE'S THEIR YOUNGEST DAUGHTER, RIGHT?
SHE'S ALSO SEPARATED IN AGE FROM HER OLDER BROTHERS.
SO THEY HAVE REALLY, REALLY, SHOWERED HER WITH AFFECTION.
COULD IT BE THAT THEY'VE SPOILED HER?
ABSO-LUTELY.
She stays home from school and stuff.

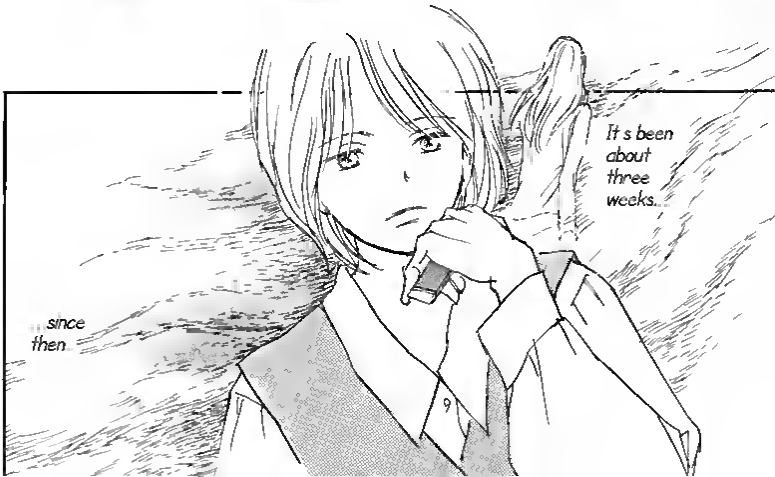
MI---
MICHIKO-CHAN!
!

eek
SLAM!

Cotton 4

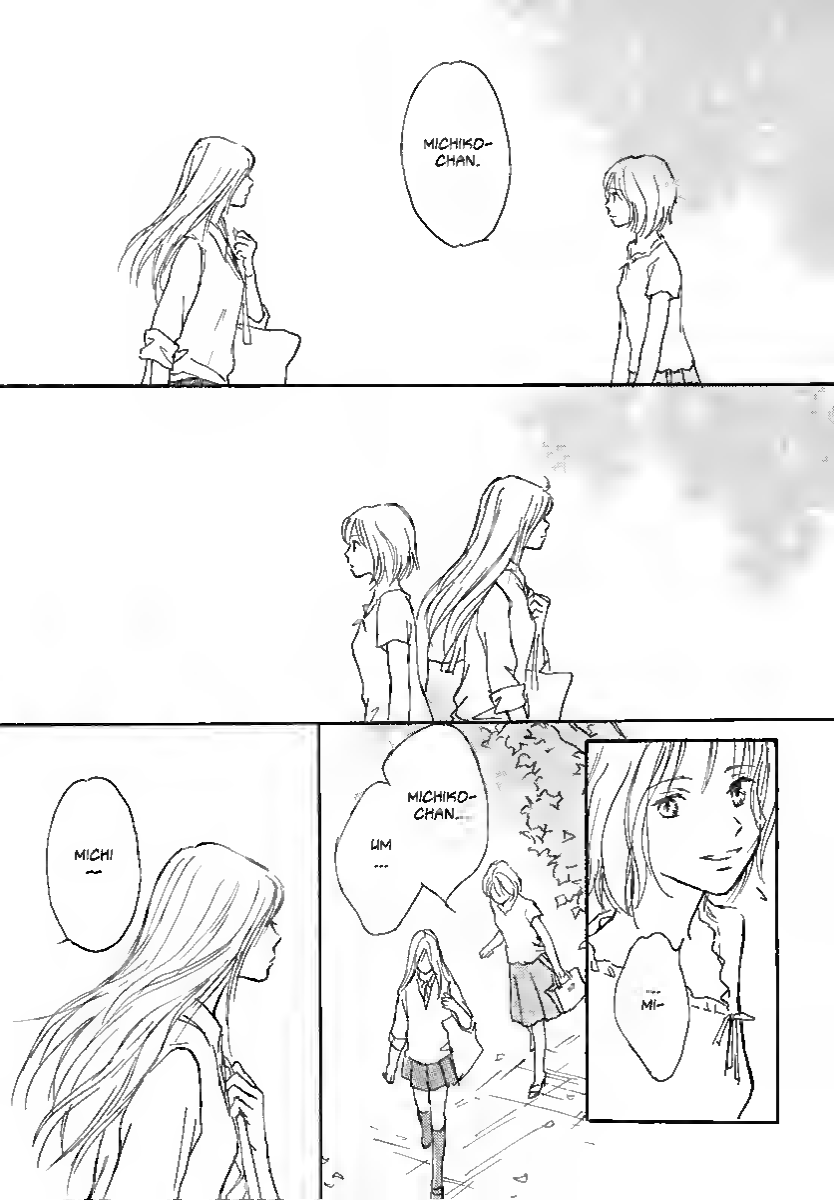

spaced out
wip
HELLOOO? ARE YOU AWAKE?
WHAT ARE YOU SPACING OUT FOR?
... YEAH. RIGHT.
IF YOU WORK LIKE THAT, YOU'LL END UP MAKING MISTAKES!

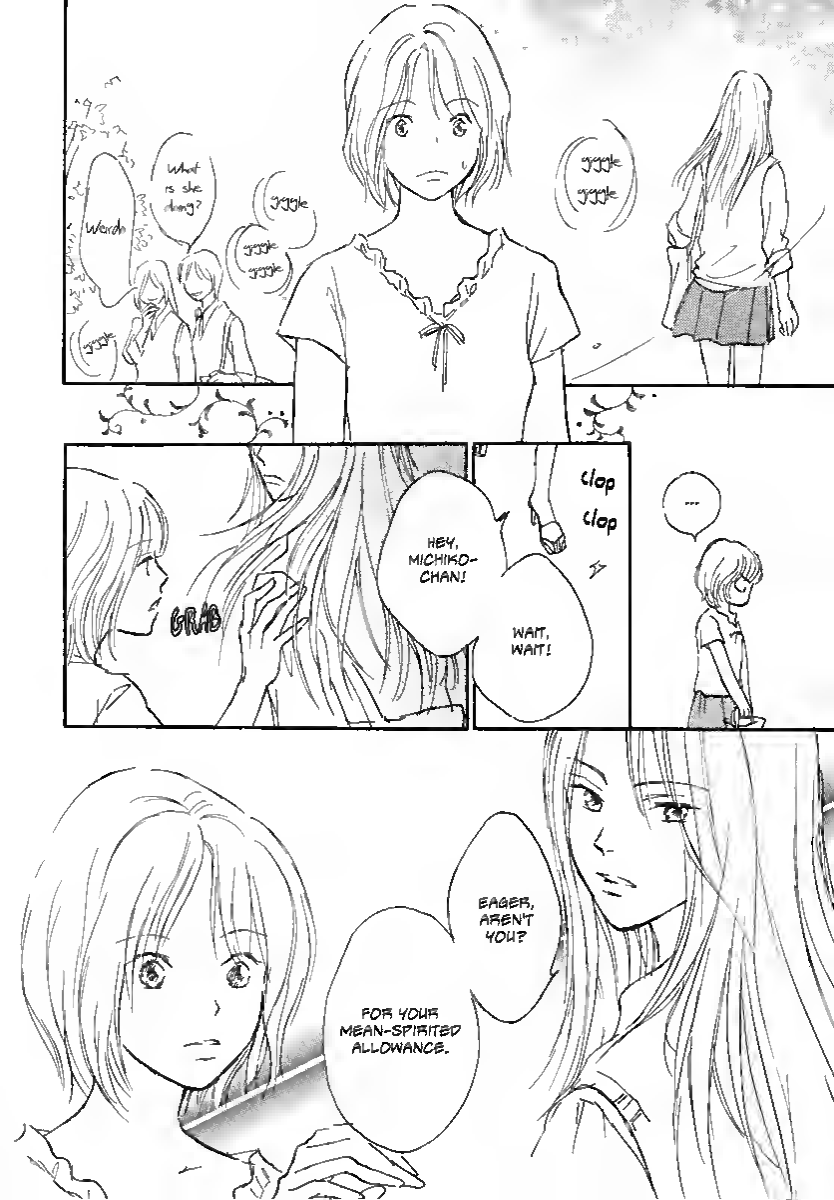
GUM
clk clk
flow
THANKS.
THIS WILL WAKE YOU UP. SUPER ULTRAMINT.

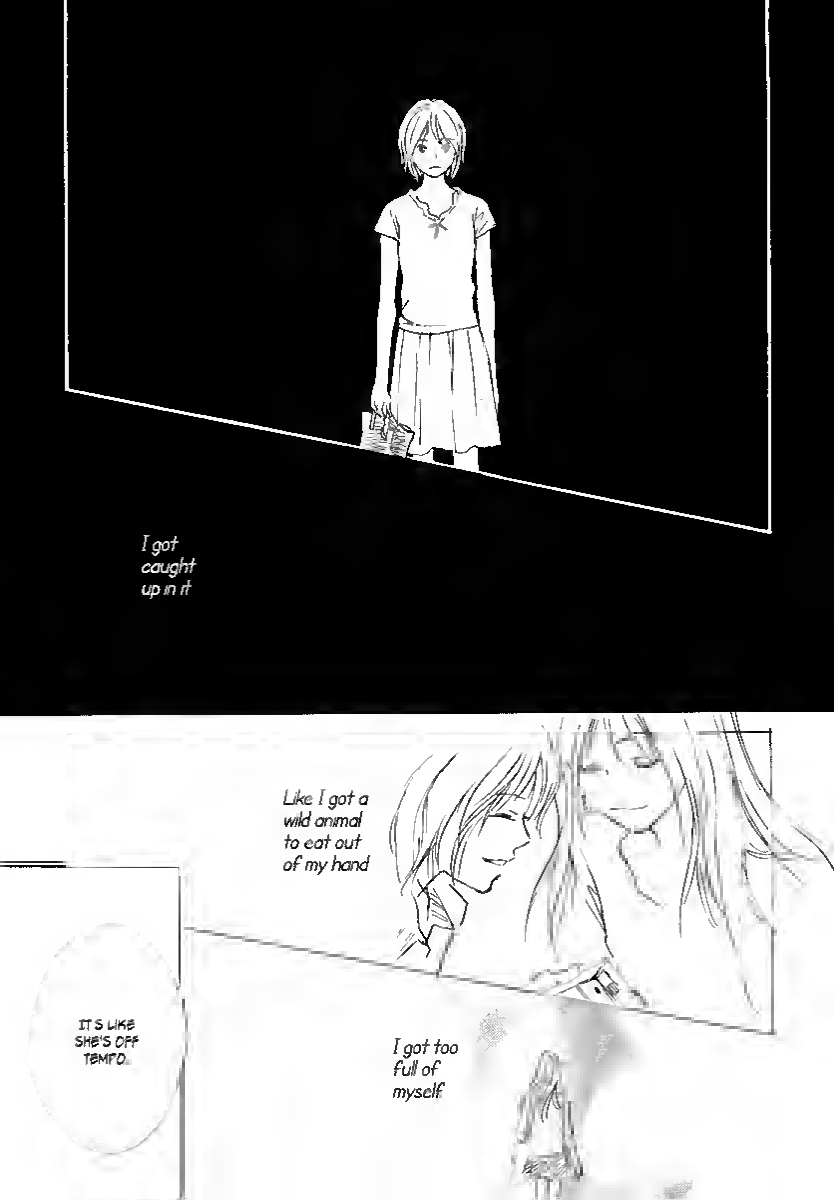

It's been about three weeks...
...since then.

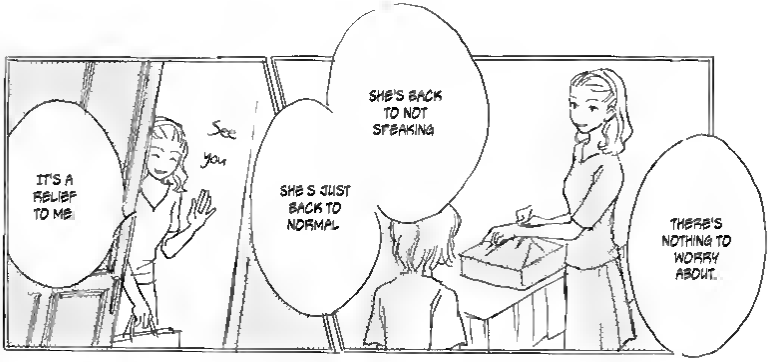
SOMETIMES I'M DROWNED IN LONELINESS
...OWS
OW OW OW OW!
KARIYA?
rattle
MY WISDOM TOOTH HAS BEEN HURTING SINCE THIS MORNING.
I'VE ABOUT HAD IT.

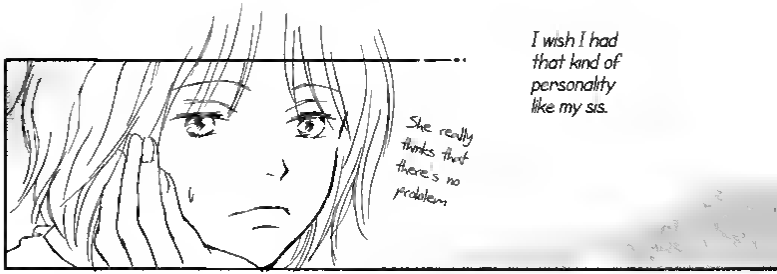
WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING?
Leaving work early to come play stalker
Ah ha ha
No way!
Ha ha ha ha
Ha ha ha
WHAT'S MORE, THERE'S NO WAY TO TELL IF SHE'S COME TO SCHOOL.
Was I too rash?

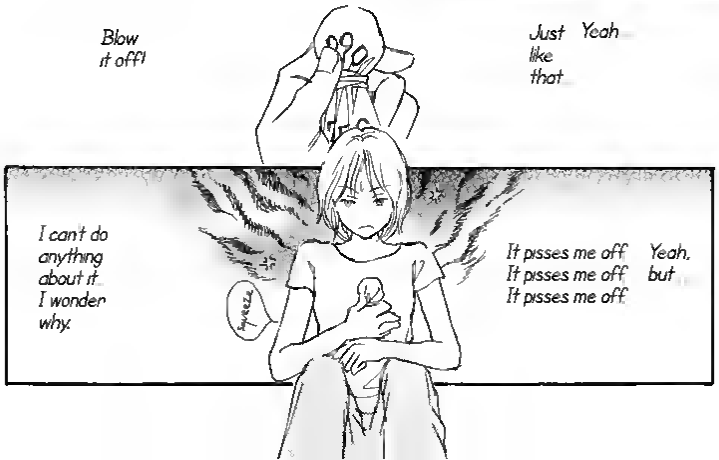

MICHIKO-CHAN.
MICHIKO-CHAN...
UM ...
... MI-
MICHI ~~

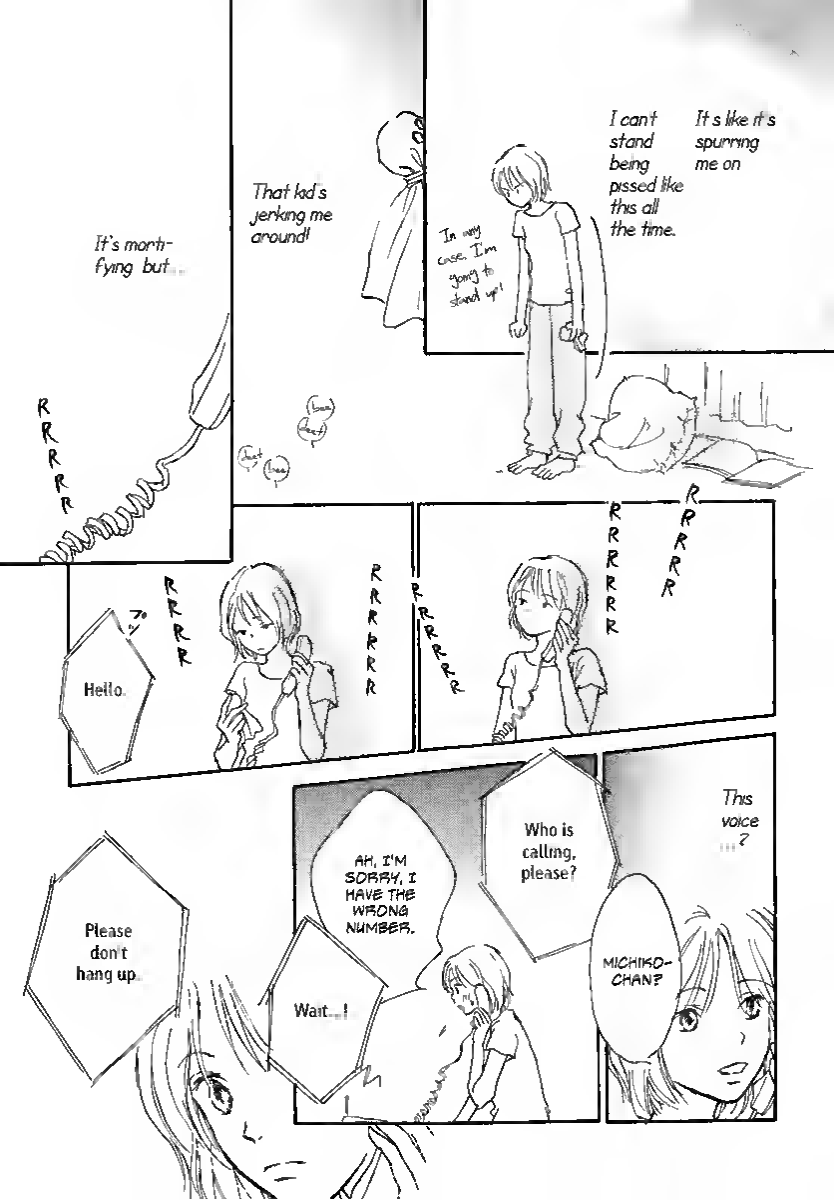

Weird
What is she doing?
giggle
giggle
giggle
giggle
giggle
giggle
GRAB
HEY, MICHIKO-CHAN!
WAIT, WAIT!
clap
clap
...
EAGER, AREN'T YOU?
FOR YOUR MEAN-SPIRITED ALLOWANCE.

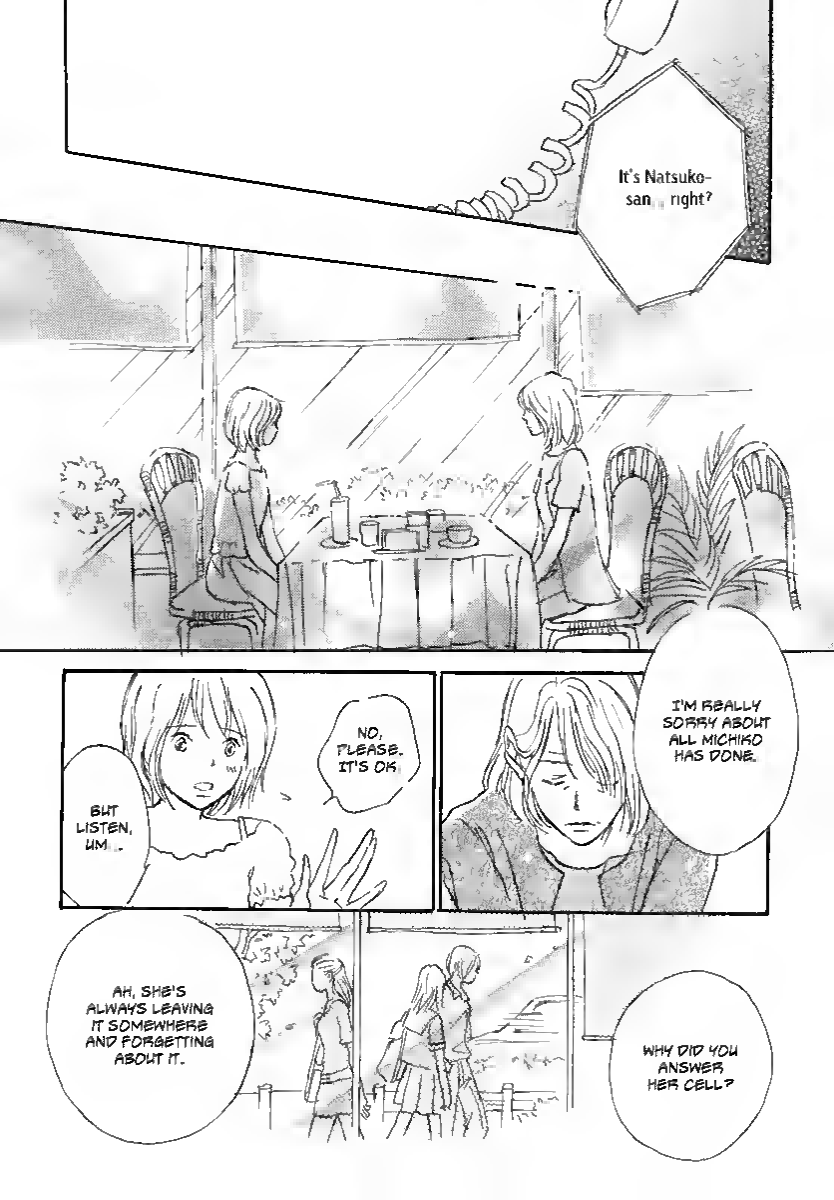

I got caught up in it
Like I got a wild animal to eat out of my hand
I got too full of myself
IT'S LIKE SHE'S OFF TEMPO.

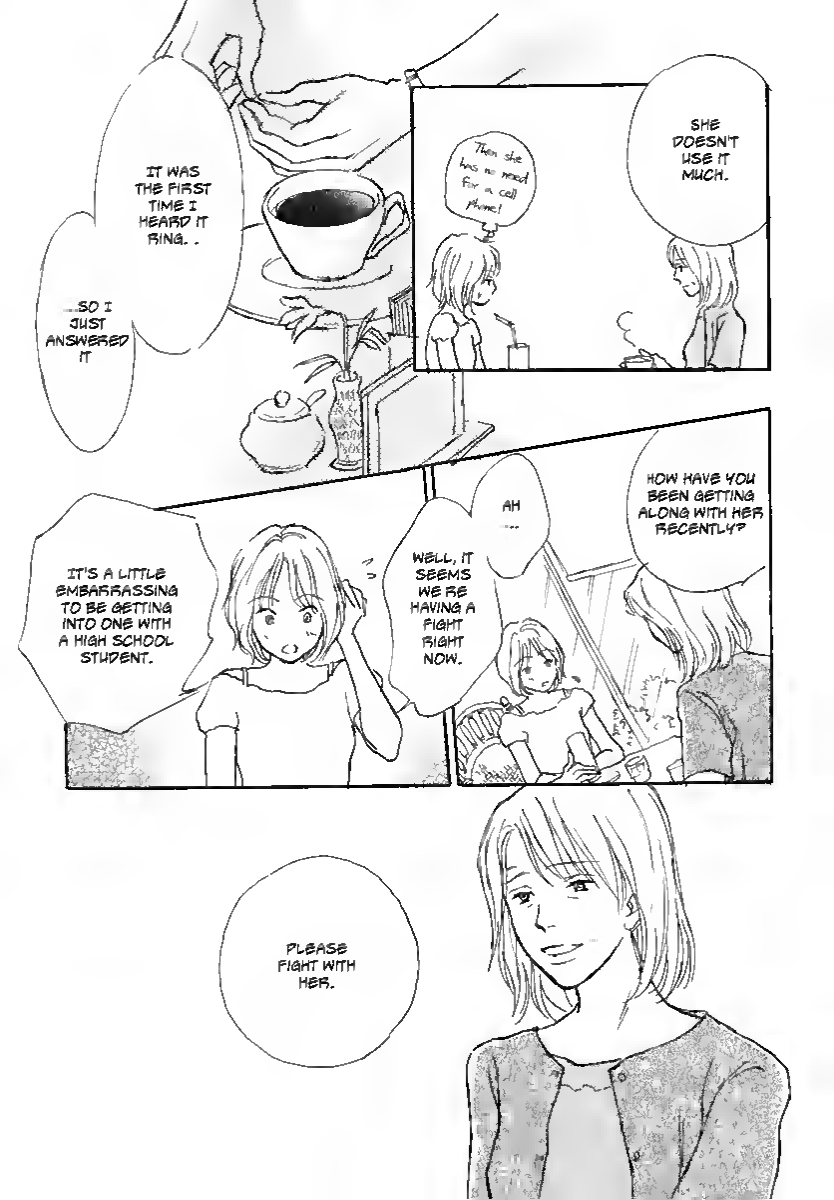

IT'S A RELIEF TO ME.
See you.
SHE'S JUST BACK TO NORMAL
SHE'S BACK TO NOT SPEAKING
THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

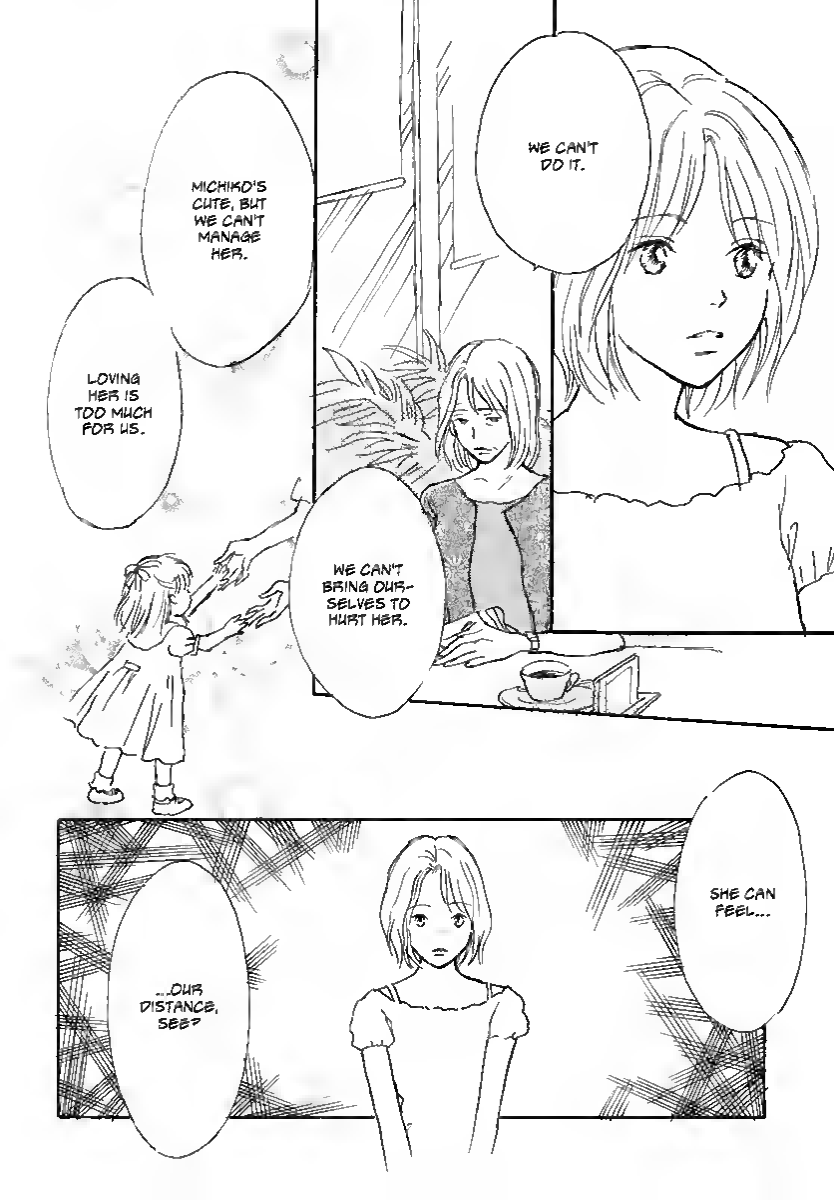

She really thinks that there's no problem.
I wish I had that kind of personality like my sis.


Blow it off!
Just like that
Yeah
I can't do anything about it. I wonder why.
It pisses me off. It pisses me off. It pisses me off.
Yeah, but
Sqeeze


It's mortifying but...
That kid's jerking me around!
In any case, I'm going to stand up!
I can't stand being pissed like this all the time.
It's like it's spurring me on
RRRRR
Hello.
RRRRR
RRRRR
RRRRRR
RRRRR
RRRRR
Please don't hang up.
Wait...!
AH, I'M SORRY, I HAVE THE WRONG NUMBER.
Who is calling, please?
MICHIKO-CHAN?
This voice...?


It's Natsuko-san, right?
I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT ALL MICHIKO HAS DONE.
NO, PLEASE. IT'S OK.
BUT LISTEN, UM...
WHY DID YOU ANSWER HER CELL?
AH, SHE'S ALWAYS LEAVING IT SOMEWHERE AND FORGETTING ABOUT IT.

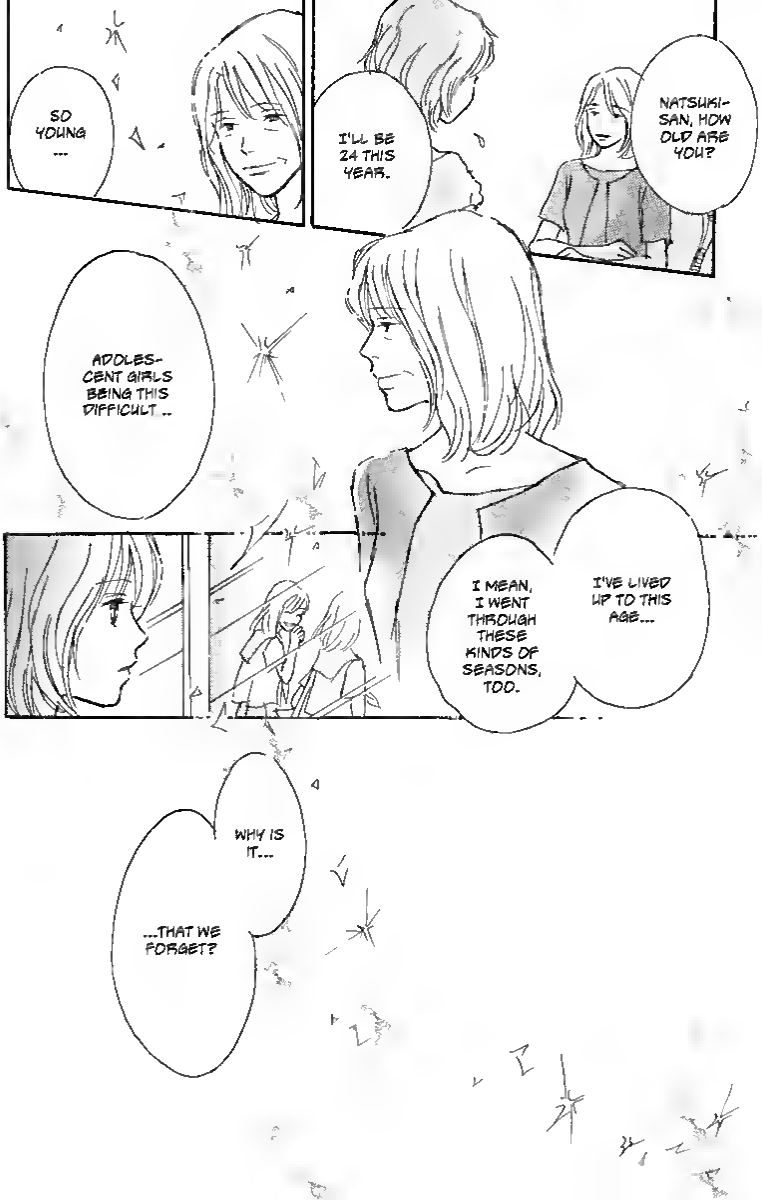

SHE DOESN'T USE IT MUCH.
Then she has no need for a cell phone!
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I HEARD IT RING. .
...SO I JUST ANSWERED IT
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN GETTING ALONG WITH HER RECENTLY?
AH ....
WELL, IT SEEMS WE'RE HAVING A FIGHT RIGHT NOW.
IT'S A LITTLE EMBARRASSING TO BE GETTING INTO ONE WITH A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT.
PLEASE FIGHT WITH HER.


WE CAN'T DO IT.
MICHIKO'S CUTE, BUT WE CAN'T MANAGE HER.
LOVING HER IS TOO MUCH FOR US.
WE CAN'T BRING OURSELVES TO HURT HER.
SHE CAN FEEL....
...OUR DISTANCE, SEE?

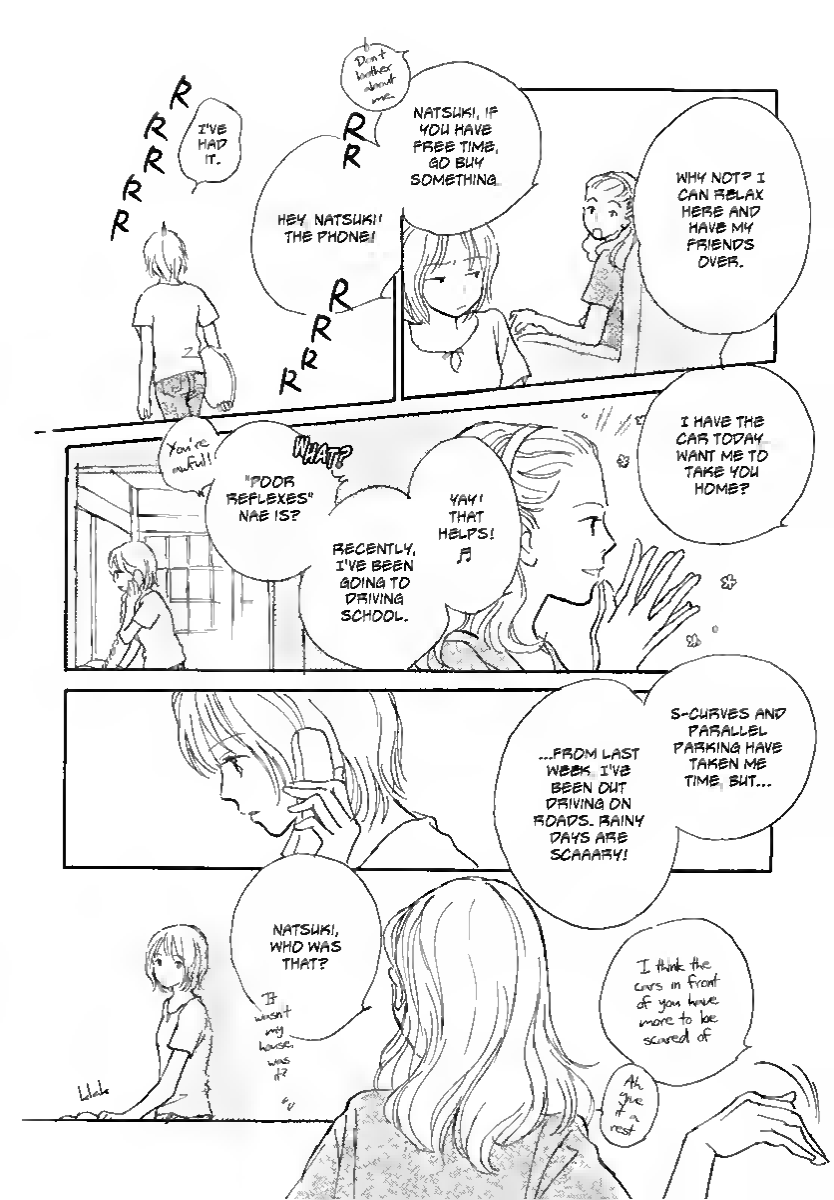
MICHIKO HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DEPEND-ABLE CHILD...
...THAT HAS NOT NEEDED MUCH ATTEN-TION.
No way
SHE'S ALWAYS SEEN ADULTS IN OUR HOME
HER BROTHERS ARE MUCH OLDER AND SO ARE WE.
Thanks for waiting
I HAVE FELT THAT WE...
...REALLY SPOILED THAT CHILD.
BUT AS FOR THAT GIRL HERSELF SHE'S NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH SHE'S DEPENDED ON US.

I ALWAYS END UP GETTING FLUS-TERED...
...BY HER ANGER.
IT'S SHAMEFUL TO ADMIT NOW...
...BUT I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO DEAL WITH MY OWN DAUGHTER.
SHE'S CLUMSY.
SHE SEEMS EXPRESSION-LESS, WITHOUT FEELINGS, RIGHT?

BUT INSIDE HER HEART ...
...THERE ARE MANY MEMORIES FLUTTERING THERE.
SOMETIMES, THEY COME EXPLODING TO THE SURFACE VIOLENTLY.
IT WOULD BE EASIER IF SHE WERE MORE CUNNING.
GET IT ALL OUT INTO WORDS.
LIES, WHATEVER

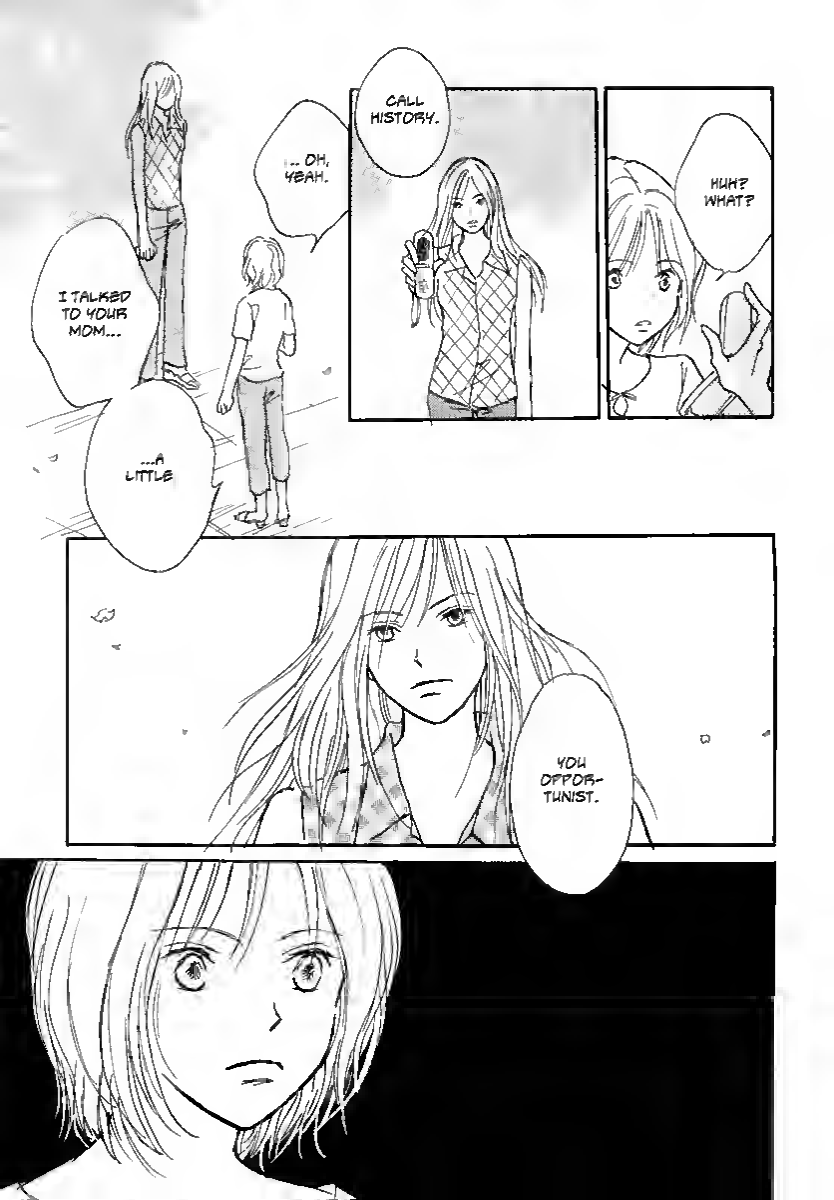

NATSUKI-SAN, HOW OLD ARE YOU?
I'LL BE 24 THIS YEAR.
SO YOUNG ...
ADOLES-CENT GIRLS BEING THIS DIFFICULT ..
I'VE LIVED UP TO THIS AGE...
I MEAN, I WENT THROUGH THESE KINDS OF SEASONS, TOO.
WHY IS IT...
...THAT WE FORGET?

THIS WAS MY FIRST PIANO RECITAL.
WOW! CUTE!
I CAN SAY THAT EVEN THOUGH I DON'T HAVE ANY
Even though they're so tiny
LITTLE GIRLS ARE SO CUTE!
?
WHEN I LOOK AT MY MOM, RAISING KIDS SEEMS SO HARD.
DON'T BE SO FULL OF YOURSELF! WHY DO YOU COME BACK HOME SO OFTEN ANYWAY?!
HEY, DON'T WE HAVE SNACKS OR ANYTHING?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE
THANK YOU, NA-CHAN


I'VE HAD IT.
RRRRR
Don't bother about me.
R R
NATSUKI, IF YOU HAVE FREE TIME, GO BUY SOMETHING.
HEY, NATSUKI! THE PHONE!
RRRRR
WHY NOT? I CAN RELAX HERE AND HAVE MY FRIENDS OVER.
You're awful!
WHAT?
"POOR REFLEXES" NAE IS?
RECENTLY, I'VE BEEN GOING TO DRIVING SCHOOL.
YAY! THAT HELPS! ♫
I HAVE THE CAR TODAY. WANT ME TO TAKE YOU HOME?
...FROM LAST WEEK, I'VE BEEN OUT DRIVING ON ROADS. RAINY DAYS ARE SCAAARY!
S-CURVES AND PARALLEL PARKING HAVE TAKEN ME TIME, BUT...
NATSUKI, WHO WAS THAT?
It wasn't my lover, was it? ^v
I think the cars in front of you have more to be scared of
Ah, you're right.
Lilah

WRONG NUMBER.
I'M GOING OUT FOR A BIT.
COME BACK SAFE
Buy us some snacks and sweets, okay?
CLOP
huff
huff
huff
huff

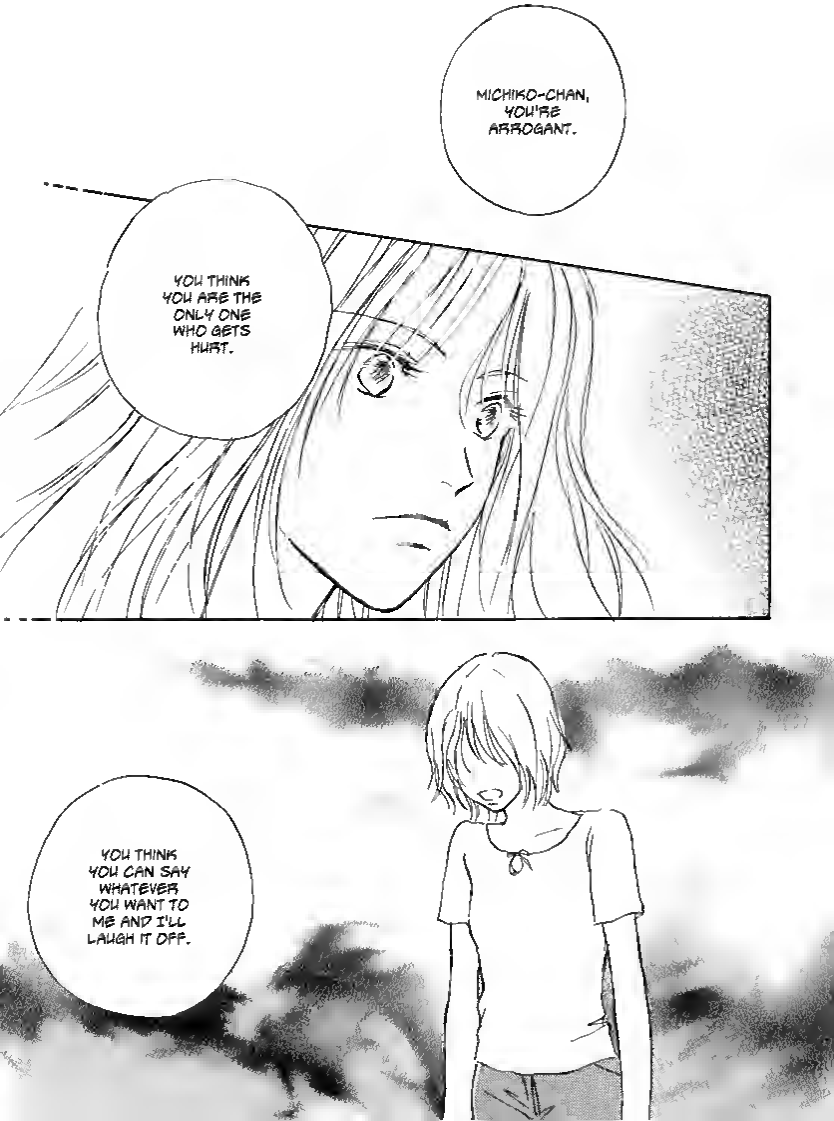
MICHIKO-CHAN!
huff
huff
I WAS GLAD TO GET A CALL...
THANKS.
...FROM YOU.
WIP


HUH? WHAT?
CALL HISTORY.
... OH, YEAH.
I TALKED TO YOUR MOM...
...A LITTLE
YOU OPPOR-TUNIST.

RUNNING HERE. RUNNING THERE
HOW NICE FOR YOU.
.. YOU TALKING ABOUT ME?
SELF-CONSCIOUS, ARE WE?
I...
...WANT TO UNDERSTAND YOU MORE, MICHIKO-CHAN
EVEN YOUR MOTHER ..
...IS CONCERNED ABOUT YOU MORE THAN YOU THINK.
THINKING ABOUT YOU..

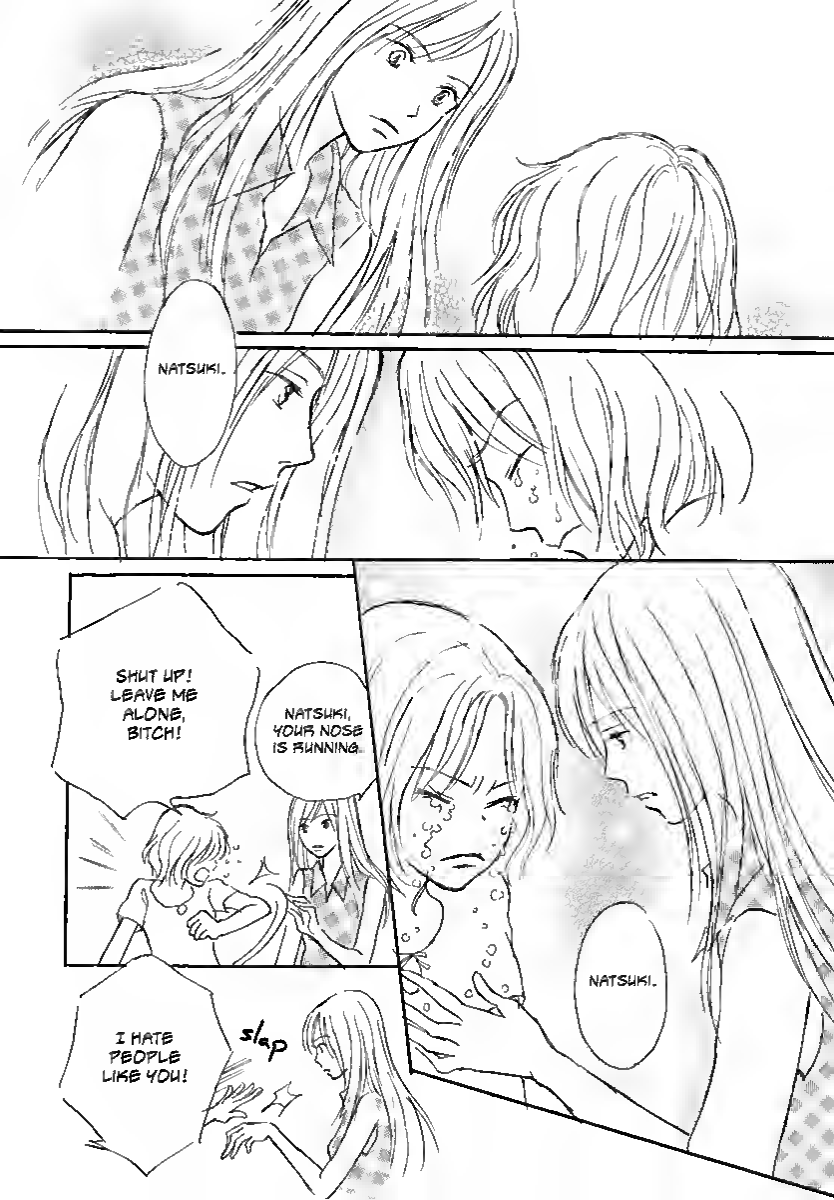
THAT'S STUPID.
I'M ME. OTHER PEOPLE ARE OTHER PEOPLE.
THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN UNDERSTAND OTHER PEOPLE.
... YEAH SAYING, 'NO ONE HAS EVER UNDERSTOOD ME'...
JUST PITYING YOURSELF...
FEELS GOOD, HUH?

GETTING CARRIED AWAY WITH YOUR "STORM" TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT...
SWISH
WHEN THINGS DON'T GO YOUR WAY...
...JUST PIN IT ALL ON "ADULTS."
SEE? WHEN PEOPLE SCORE A BULL'S-EYE ON YOU, YOU STRIKE OUT.
IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, WHY DON'T YOU SAY IT?


MICHIKO-CHAN, YOU'RE ARROGANT.
YOU THINK YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO GETS HURT.
YOU THINK YOU CAN SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT TO ME AND I'LL LAUGH IT OFF.

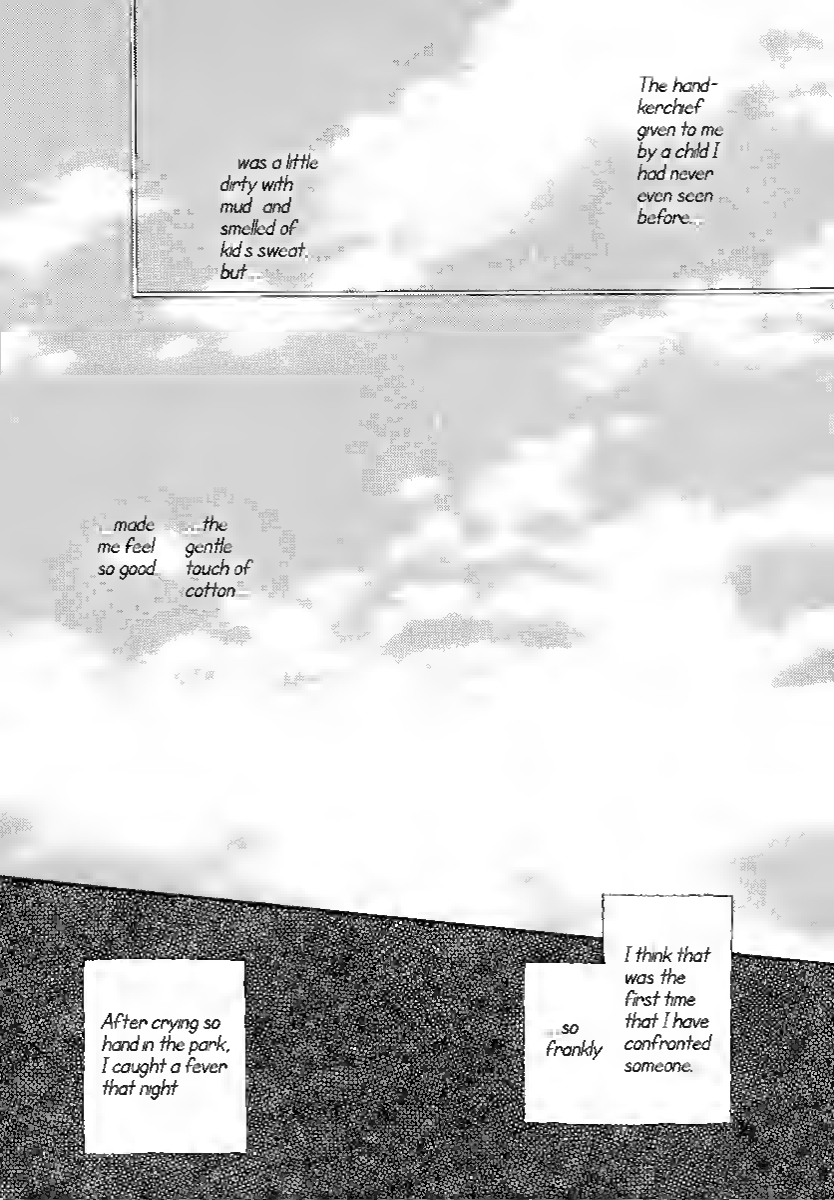
BECAUSE I'M AN ADULT.
YOU THINK YOU CAN SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT AND IT WON'T HURT ME, RIGHT?
ARROGANT!
THAT WAY ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS LOOK DOWN ON OTHER PEOPLE.
BOTH ANGER AND SOLITUDE, YOU THINK THEY'RE YOUR OWN SPECIAL PRIVILEGE.

MICHIKO-CHAN, YOU'RE NOT SPECIAL OR ANYTHING!
drip
drip
drip
drip
drip
drip


NATSUKI.
NATSUKI.
SHUT UP! LEAVE ME ALONE, BITCH!
NATSUKI, YOUR NOSE IS RUNNING.
I HATE PEOPLE LIKE YOU!
slap

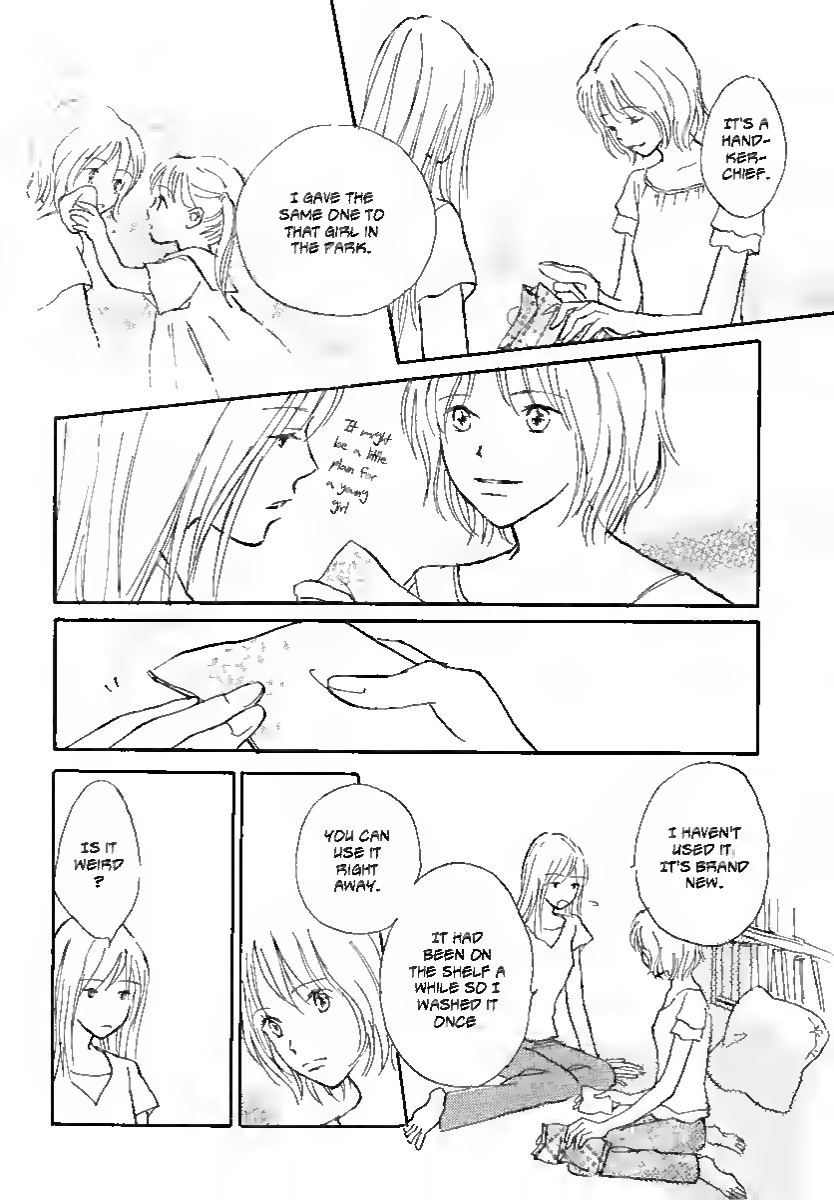
I LOVE YOU!
I SAID I HATE YOU! HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU, MICHIKO!
... BUT I LOVE YOU, NATSUKI.
SLAP SLAP SLAP
HATE. HATE. HATE.
LOVE. LOVE. LOVE.
WA~H

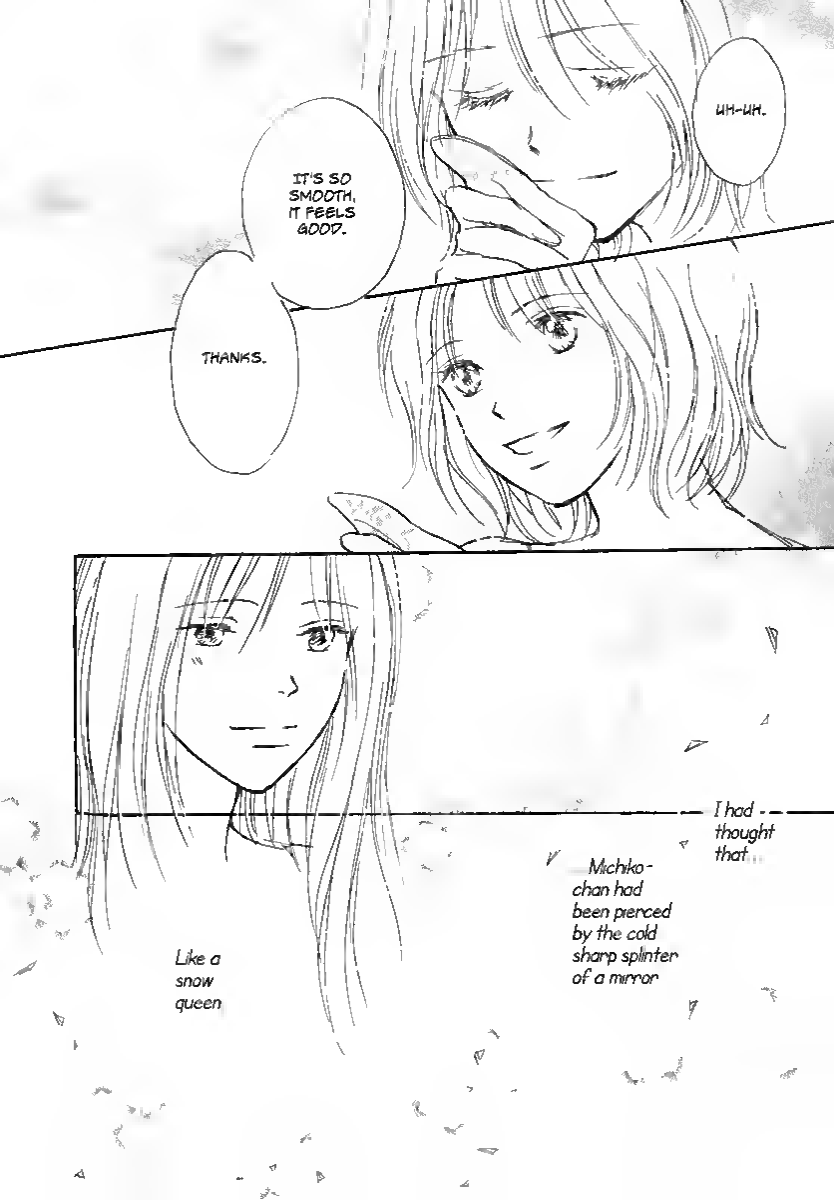
HEY, LADIES.
NO FIGHTING, 'KAY?
YOU MAKE UP WITH EACH OTHER, 'KAY?
...YEAH
OI! Make-up buddies!
THANKS.
We had to wipe our tears.
The summer sky was blinding blue

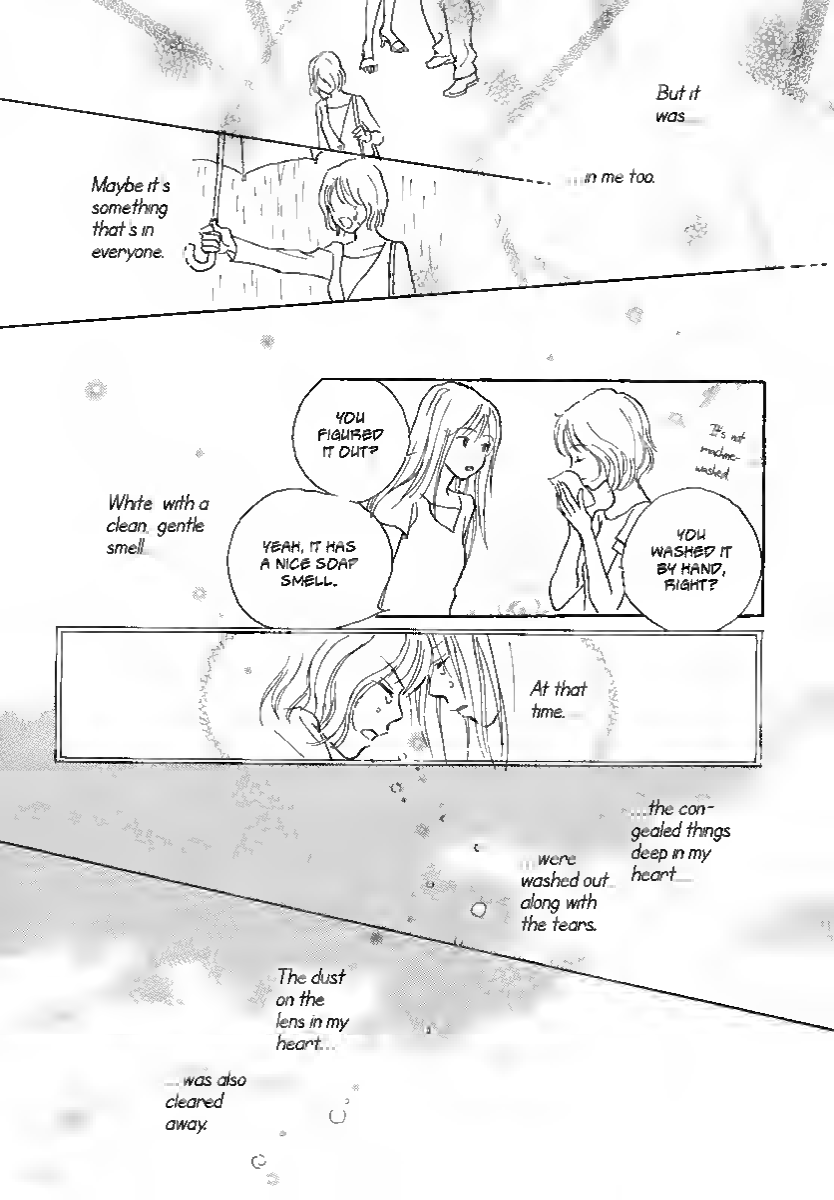

The hand-kerchief given to me by a child I had never even seen before...
...was a little dirty with mud and smelled of kid's sweat. but...
...made me feel so good...
...the gentle touch of cotton...
After crying so hard in the park, I caught a fever that night
...so frankly
I think that was the first time that I have confronted someone.

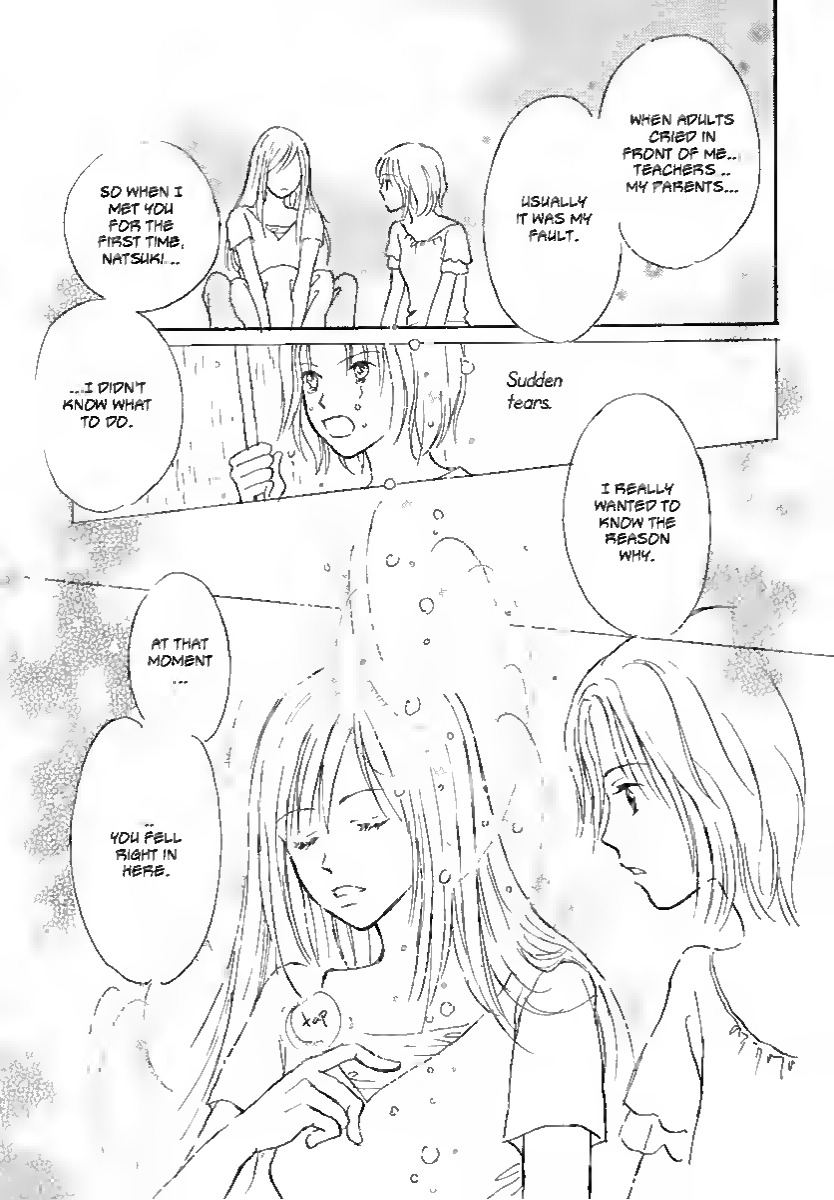
FRIDAY, ARE YOU DOING ANYTHING?
NO.
SORRY...
...TO MAKE YOU WORK OVERTIME WITH ME.
Right after you've gotten better
TAT
YA-Y!
HOW ABOUT I TREAT YOU TO DINNER IN THANKS
SUSHI?
I HEARD THAT
Don't pick something too expensive!
I'M CHOOSING THE PLACE!

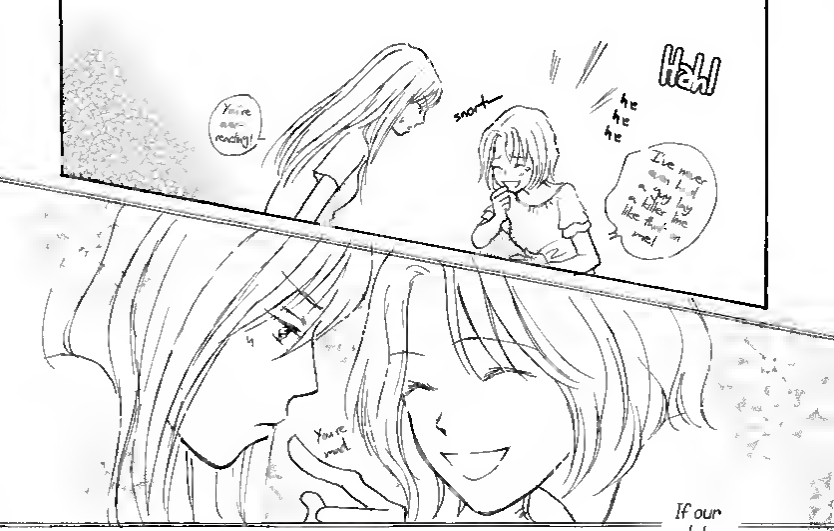
WHY THE HELL IS MASHIBO ONLY INVITING YOU, KARIYA?
Well he's latching onto a convenient excuse.
SO WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR WISDOM TOOTH? GOT IT FILLED?
Geez!
IF YOU'VE GOT ENOUGH FREE TIME TO CHAT, THEN HELP ME WITH THIS!
I'm busy!
Hud
OH? FOR ME?
CAN I OPEN IT?
SURE.


I GAVE THE SAME ONE TO THAT GIRL IN THE PARK.
IT'S A HANDKER-CHIEF.
It might be a little mean for a young girl
IS IT WEIRD ?
YOU CAN USE IT RIGHT AWAY.
IT HAD BEEN ON THE SHELF A WHILE SO I WASHED IT ONCE
I HAVEN'T USED IT. IT'S BRAND NEW.


UH-UH.
IT'S SO SMOOTH. IT FEELS GOOD.
THANKS.
I had thought that
Michiko-chan had been pierced by the cold sharp splinter of a mirror
Like a snow queen


But it was...
...in me too.
Maybe it's something that's in everyone.
YOU FIGURED IT OUT?
YEAH, IT HAS A NICE SOAP SMELL.
It's not machine-washed.
YOU WASHED IT BY HAND, RIGHT?
White with a clean, gentle smell...
At that time...
...the congealed things deep in my heart...
...were washed out along with the tears.
The dust on the lens in my heart...
...was also cleared away.


WHEN ADULTS CRIED IN FRONT OF ME.. TEACHERS .. MY PARENTS...
USUALLY IT WAS MY FAULT.
SO WHEN I MET YOU FOR THE FIRST TIME, NATSUKI...
...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
Sudden tears.
I REALLY WANTED TO KNOW THE REASON WHY.
AT THAT MOMENT ...
.. YOU FELL RIGHT IN HERE.
ㅎㅇㅎ

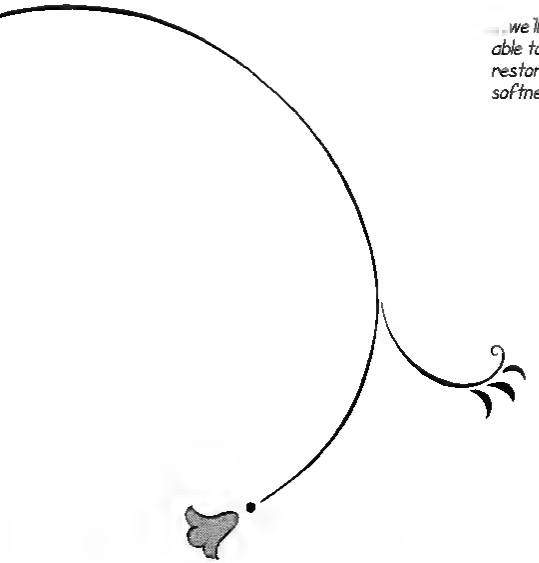


If our white cotton handkerchief...

...gets dirty. All wrinkled up...

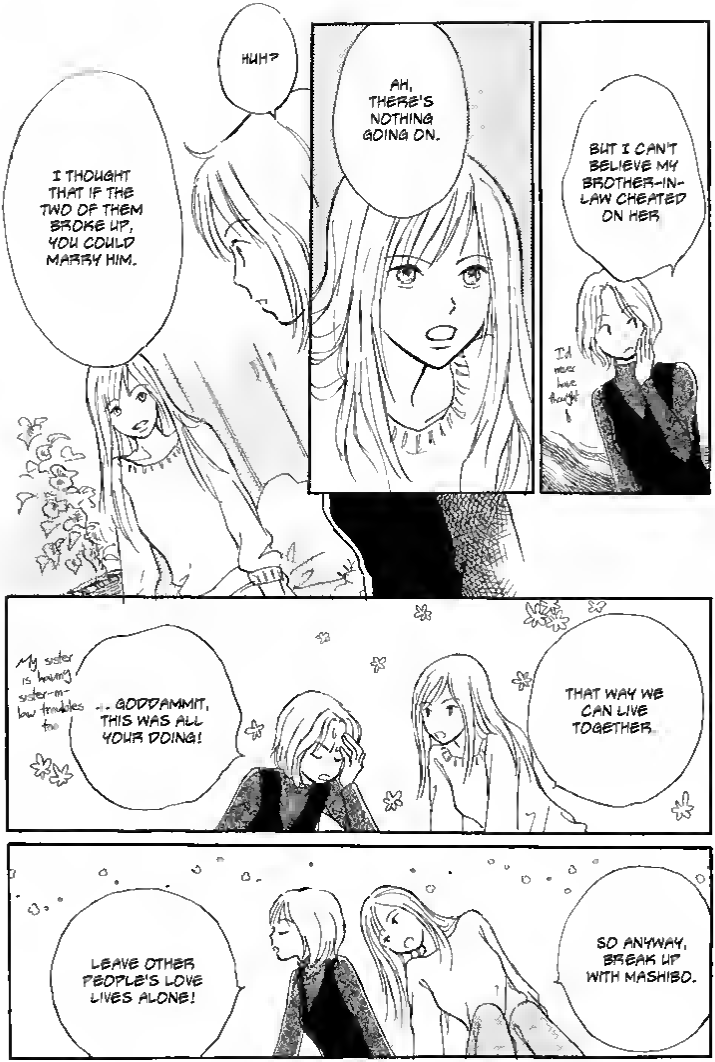
...always wash it again.

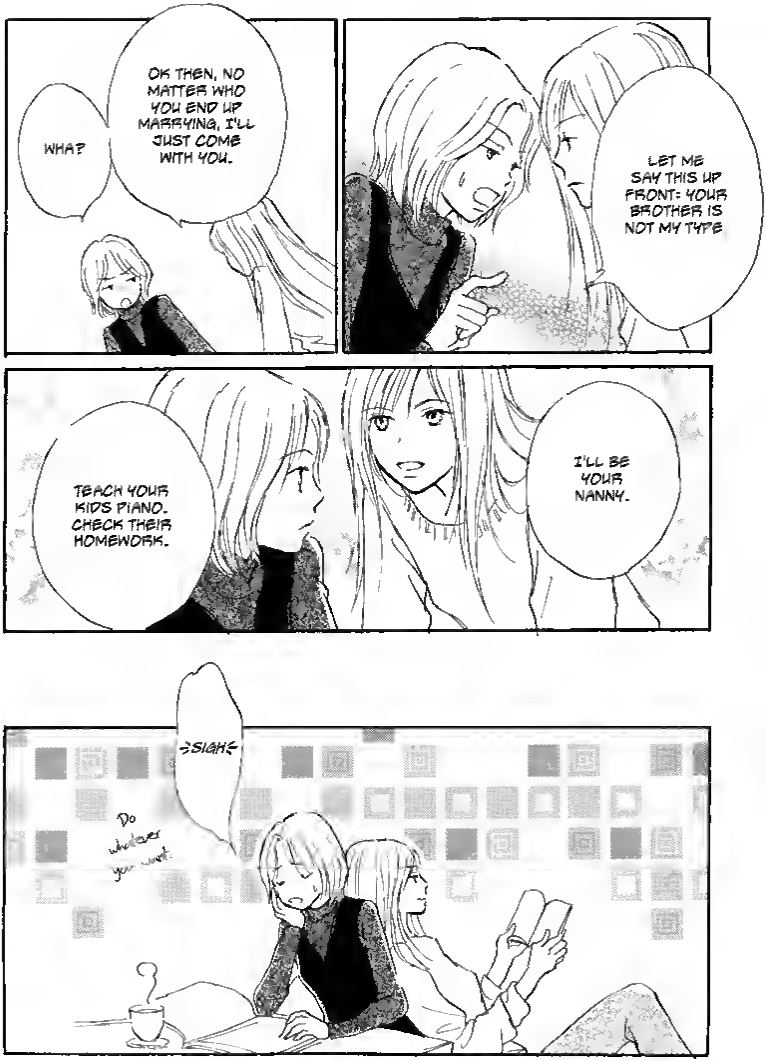
We can...


...we'll be able to restore this softness
I'm convinced that no matter how many times we wash it...

Cotton End

Cotton after
Waah!
YOU'RE AWFUL! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID IT WITH A GIRL YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE YOUR OWN DAUGHTER, HIROYUKI!
Whaaaa! I can't forgive you!
Hey now just calm down!
MICHIKO-CHAN I THINK IT'S BETTER IF MY SISTER DOESN'T KNOW YOU'RE HERE.


HUH?
I THOUGHT THAT IF THE TWO OF THEM BROKE UP, YOU COULD MARRY HIM.
AH, THERE'S NOTHING GOING ON.
BUT I CAN'T BELIEVE MY BROTHER-IN-LAW CHEATED ON HER.
I'd never have thought I
My sister is having sister-in-law troubles too
... GODDAMMIT, THIS WAS ALL YOUR DOING!
THAT WAY WE CAN LIVE TOGETHER.
LEAVE OTHER PEOPLE'S LOVE LIVES ALONE!
SO ANYWAY, BREAK UP WITH MASHIBO.


WHAT?
OK THEN, NO MATTER WHO YOU END UP MARRYING, I'LL JUST COME WITH YOU.
LET ME SAY THIS UP FRONT: YOUR BROTHER IS NOT MY TYPE
TEACH YOUR KIDS PIANO. CHECK THEIR HOMEWORK.
I'LL BE YOUR NANNY.
=SIGH=
Do whatever you want.

End

CREATURE

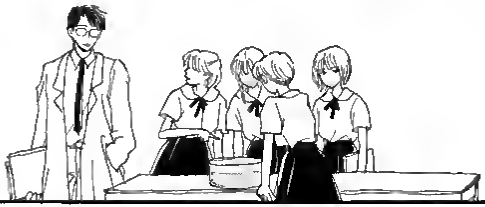
"IT'S SO CUTE"

"IS THIS A TADPOLE?"

"PLEASE SENSEI?"

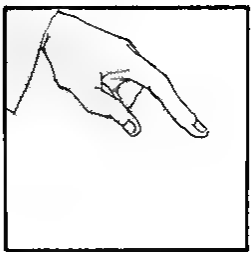
"SO CUTE! SENSEI, I WANT A COUPLE"

"IT'S SALAMANDER TADPOLES"

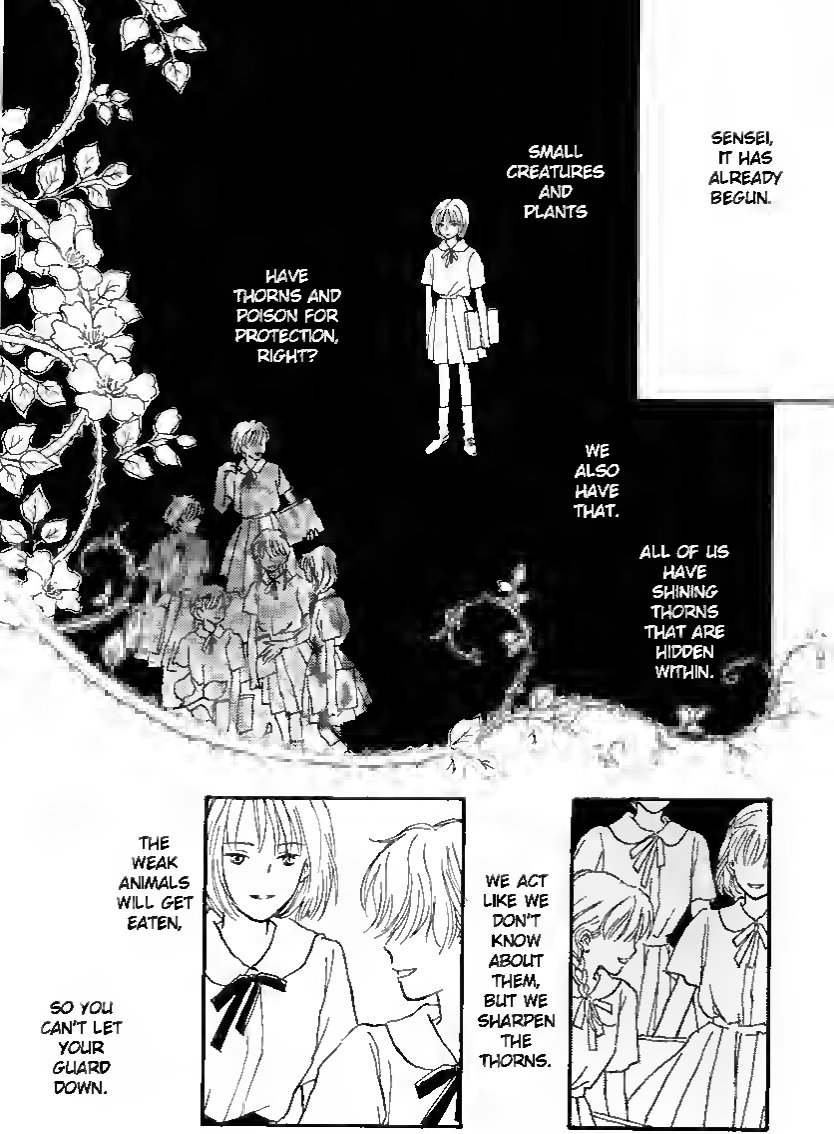


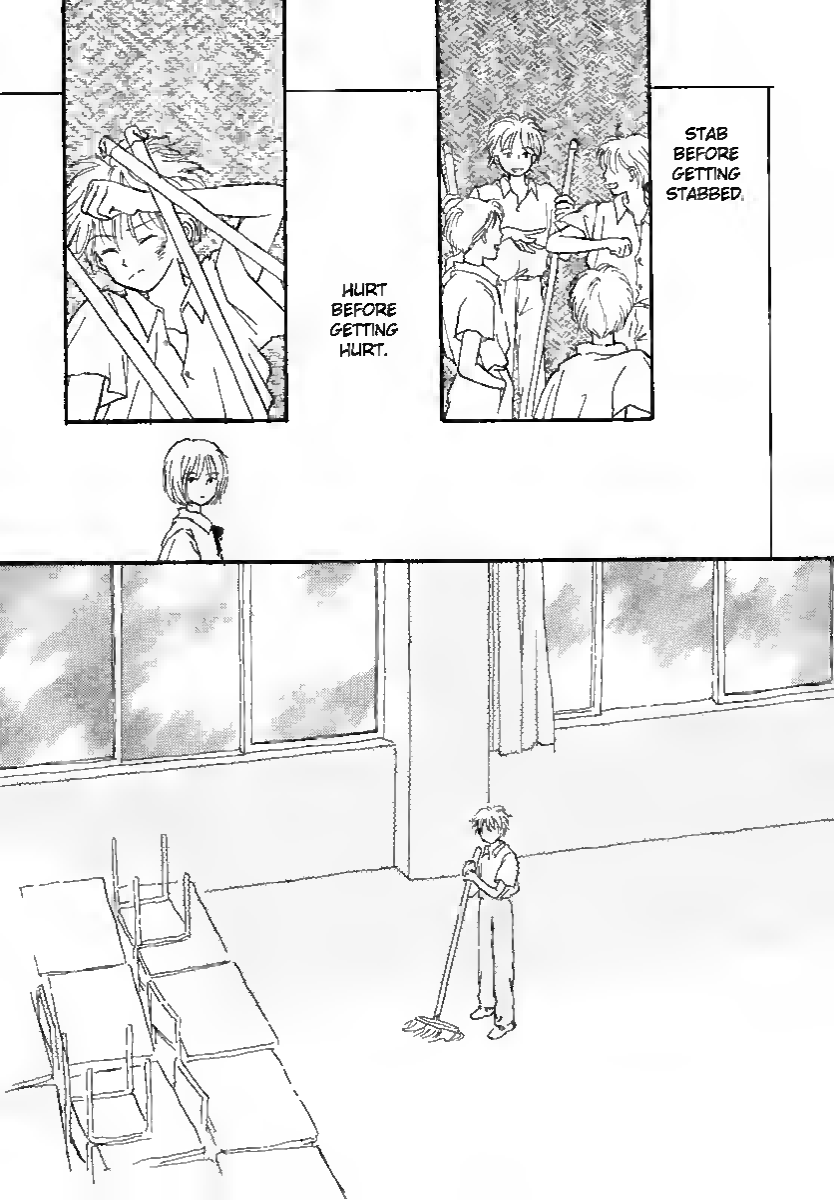
"WHAT?"

"AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WATER TANK."

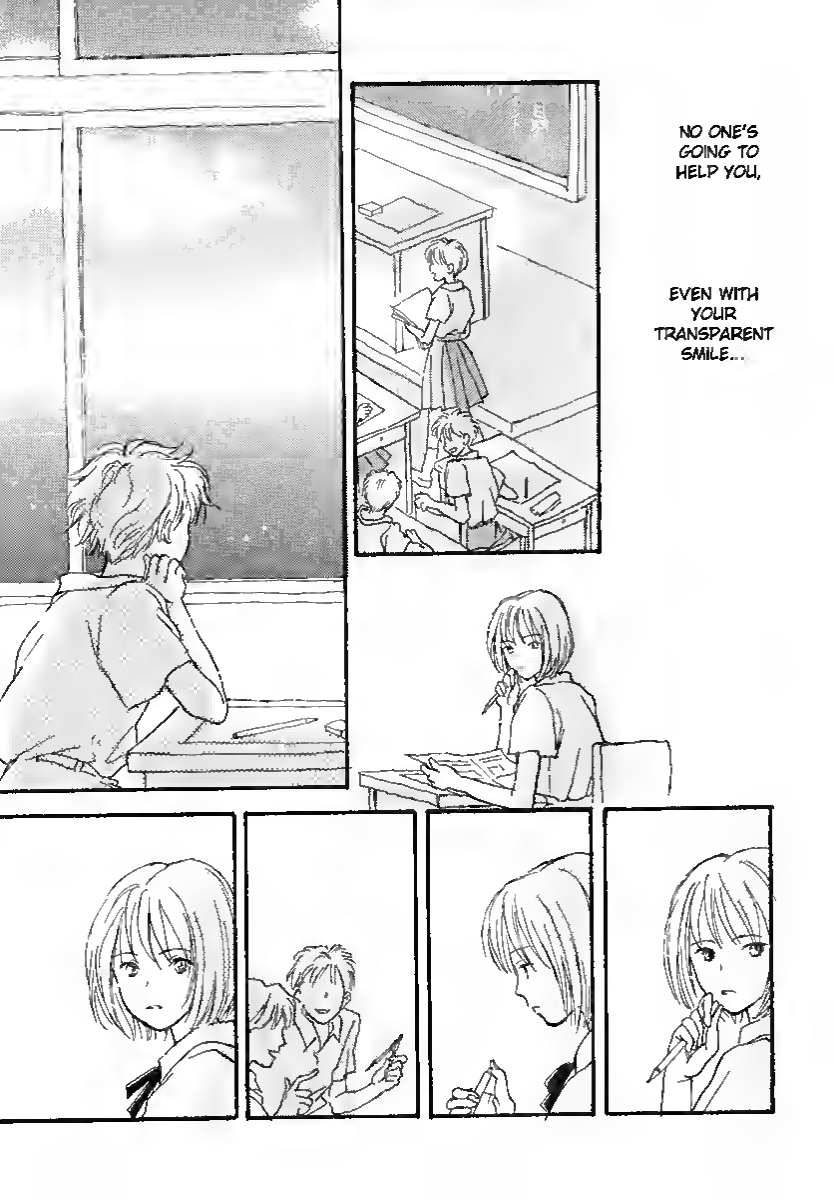


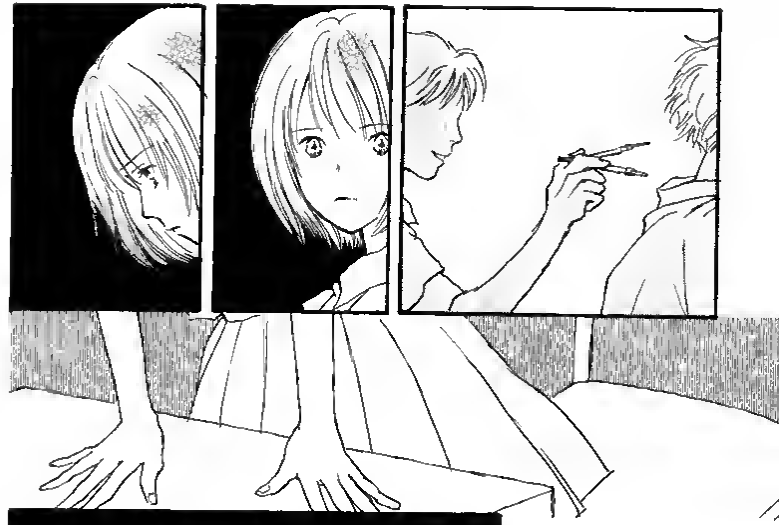
"THEY WILL SOON START TO EAT EACH OTHER"
"ARE THEY GOING TO DIE?"
"THEY WON'T EAT THE FOOD!"
SENSEI...
SENSEI...


SENSEI, IT HAS ALREADY BEGUN.
SMALL CREATURES AND PLANTS
HAVE THORNS AND POISON FOR PROTECTION, RIGHT?
WE ALSO HAVE THAT.
ALL OF US HAVE SHINING THORNS THAT ARE HIDDEN WITHIN.
THE WEAK ANIMALS WILL GET EATEN,
SO YOU CAN'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN.
WE ACT LIKE WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT THEM, BUT WE SHARPEN THE THORNS.

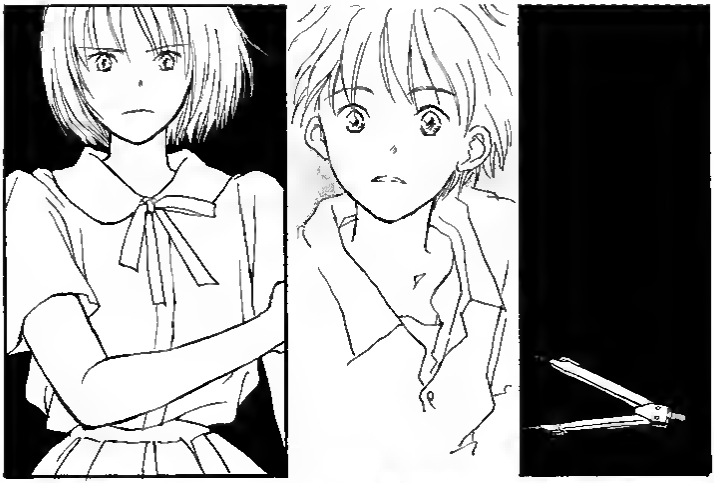

HURT BEFORE GETTING HURT.
STAB BEFORE GETTING STABBED.

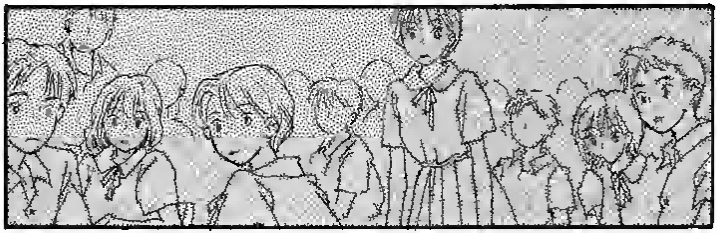
A KIND CREATURE.
CLOSE TO EXTINCTION.


NO ONE'S GOING TO HELP YOU,
EVEN WITH YOUR TRANSPARENT SMILE...

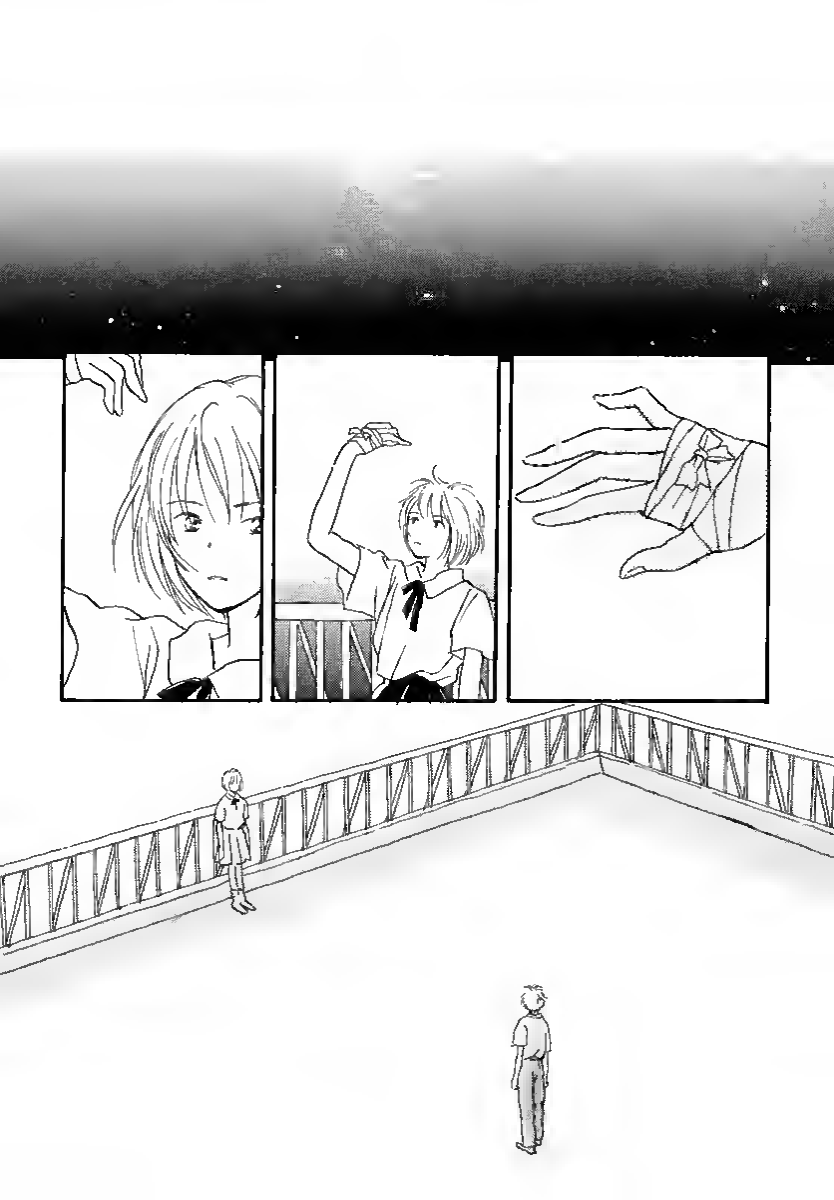


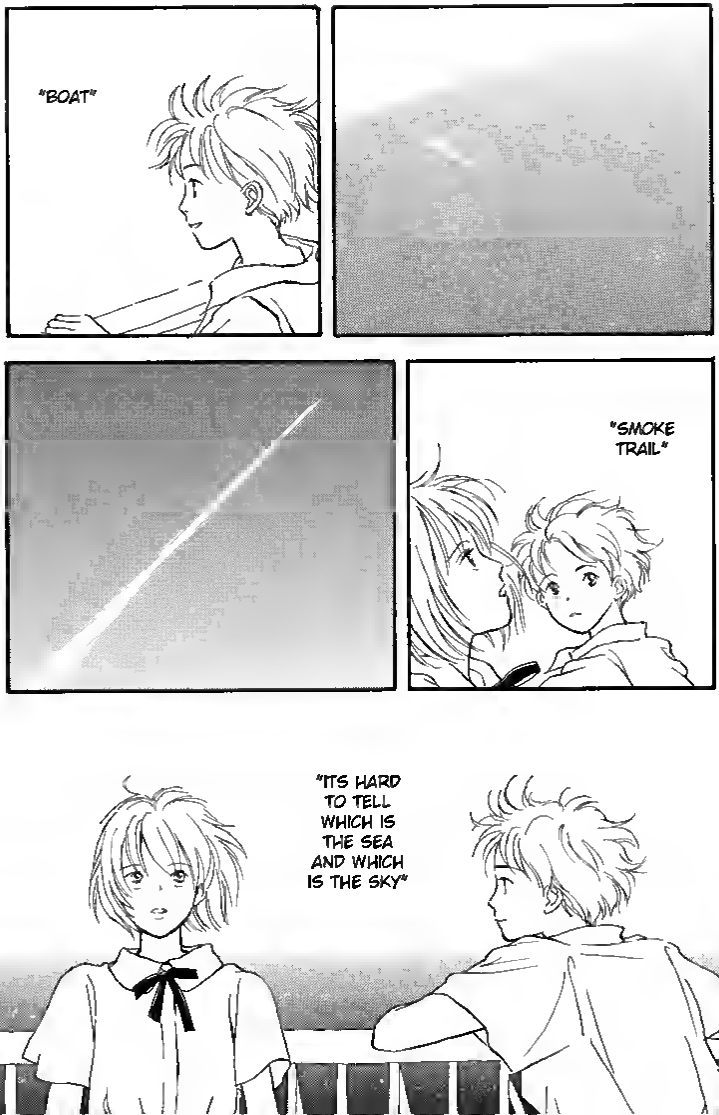
Slap

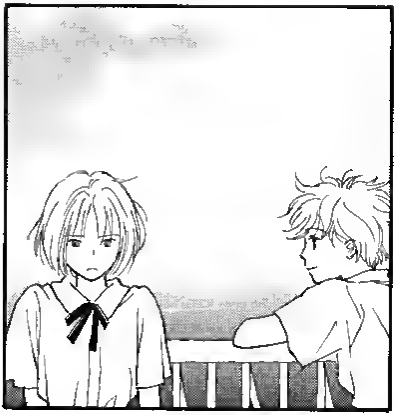




TO FAIL AND BECOME LAUGHED AT IS EASY.




"BOAT"
"SMOKE TRAIL"
"ITS HARD TO TELL WHICH IS THE SEA AND WHICH IS THE SKY"



"IT'S THE FIRST TIME SINCE WE'VE BEEN IN THE SAME CLASS TO BE ABLE TO TALK, RIGHT"

"HEY"

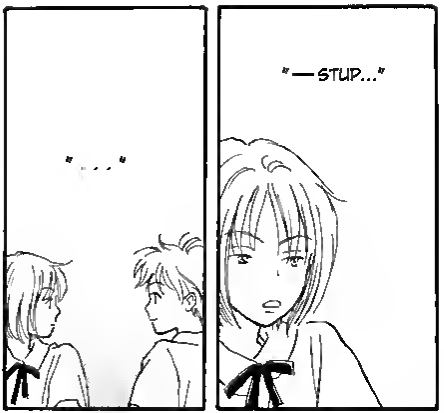
"PERHAPS A LONG TIME AGO, I WAS A BIRD"

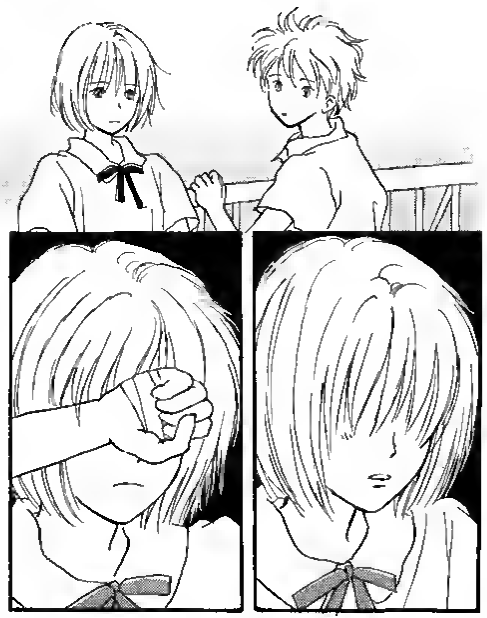
"AND YOU WERE A FISH"

"AND I SAW YOU FROM THE SKY AND YOU SAW ME FROM THE SEA"

"AND WE BOTH WERE THINKING WE WANTED TO TALK AT LEAST ONCE"

"BUT I WAS A BIRD AND YOU WERE A FISH SO IT COULDN'T COME TRUE"
"WE WERE REBORN MANY TIMES,"
"WE BECAME A SHELL AND THEN A ZEBRA AND THEN A BUTTERFLY AND THEN A RAIN DROP."
"AND NOW WE CAN TALK TOGETHER."
"THEN FINALLY WE WERE BORN AT THE SAME TIME AS THE SAME CREATURE,"


"..."
"—STUP..."
"...IF THAT WAS TRUE, DON'T YOU THINK IT WOULD BE AMAZING?"



"—— YEAH"

End

Hell's Castle

We're currently recruiting staff.
[illegible]ns currently open are for **translators**, **editors**, and **proofreaders**

If you're interested and want to apply,
please do so via one of the methods below

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hells.castle.scans@gmail.com

site
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forum
hellscastle.ethereal-wind.net/forum

Creature

STAFF TYPE PEOPLE

TL: YUUKO-SAN
PR: DEMONICA
EDIT: ZOOK
QC: DEMONICA

ENJOY THIS ONESHOT :D IS KIND OF SHORT FOR ONE, BUT IS GOOD NONE THE LESS.

Happy Birthday Yuuko-san
From all your Loyal
Subjects at
Hell's Castle

COTTON

STORY 3

BY KONNO KITA

THE END

RAW HUNTER/QC ISHITORI
TRANSLATOR KALENDEL
EDITOR TIM

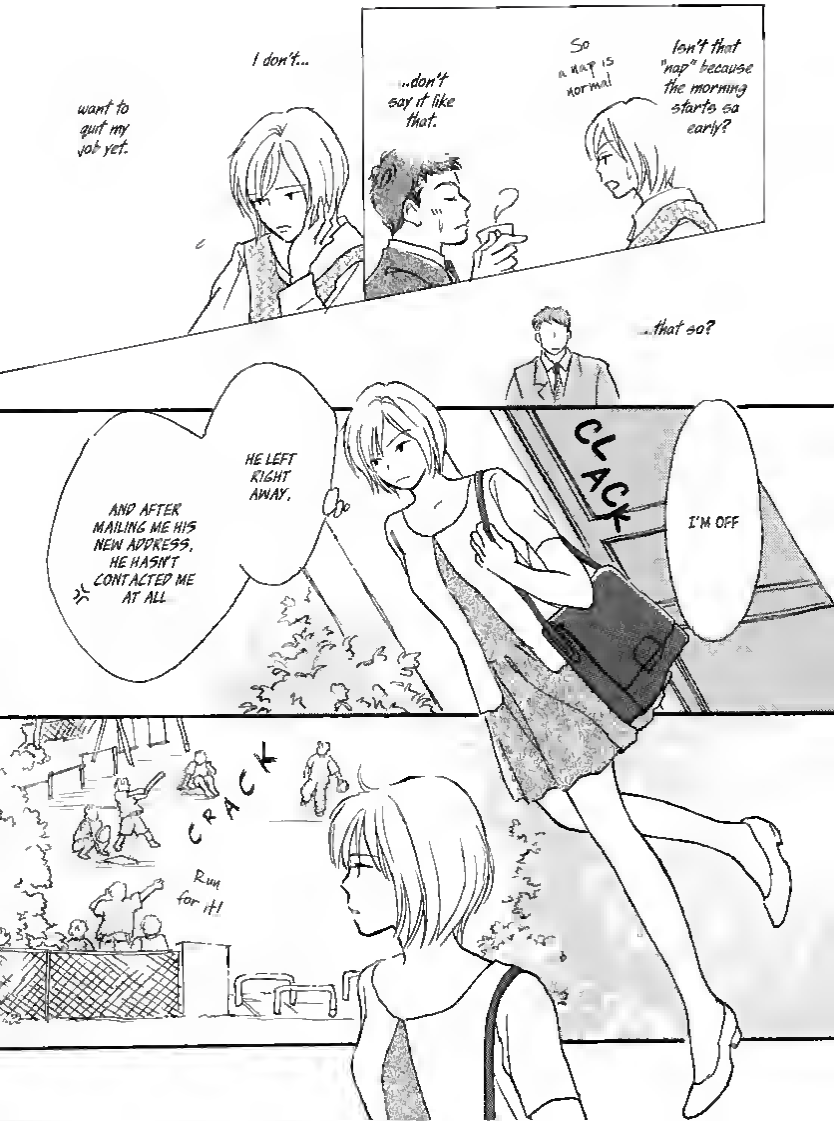
THE-END-MANGA.LIVEJOURNAL.COM
HEAD TO OUR BLOG TO VOTE FOR THE NEXT MANGA WE COMPLETE!

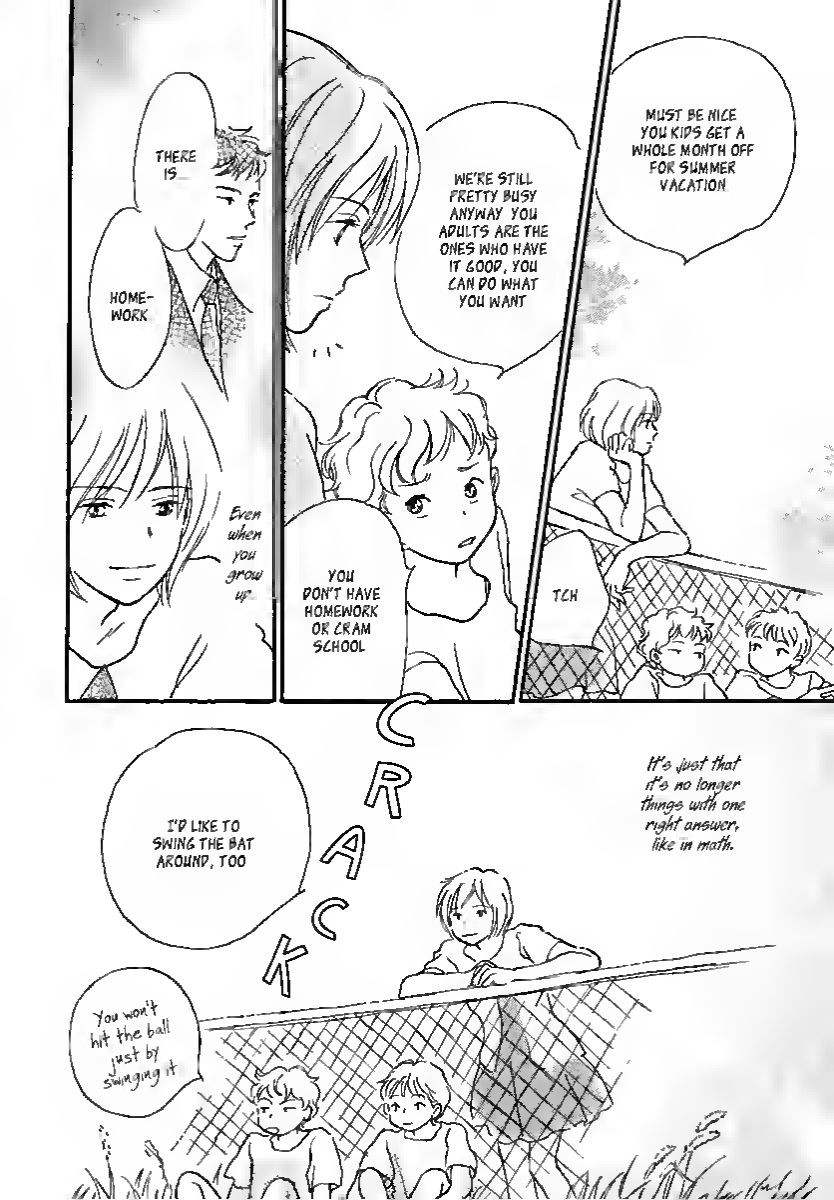
A ne-w morning has come!
yuang ding yuang ding yuang ding
It's finally morning!
Asa no Kodomo
"Morning Child"
MAN-
Open up your heart with Jo-y!
Look up at the sky-
...I DON'T WANT TO GO TO WORK...

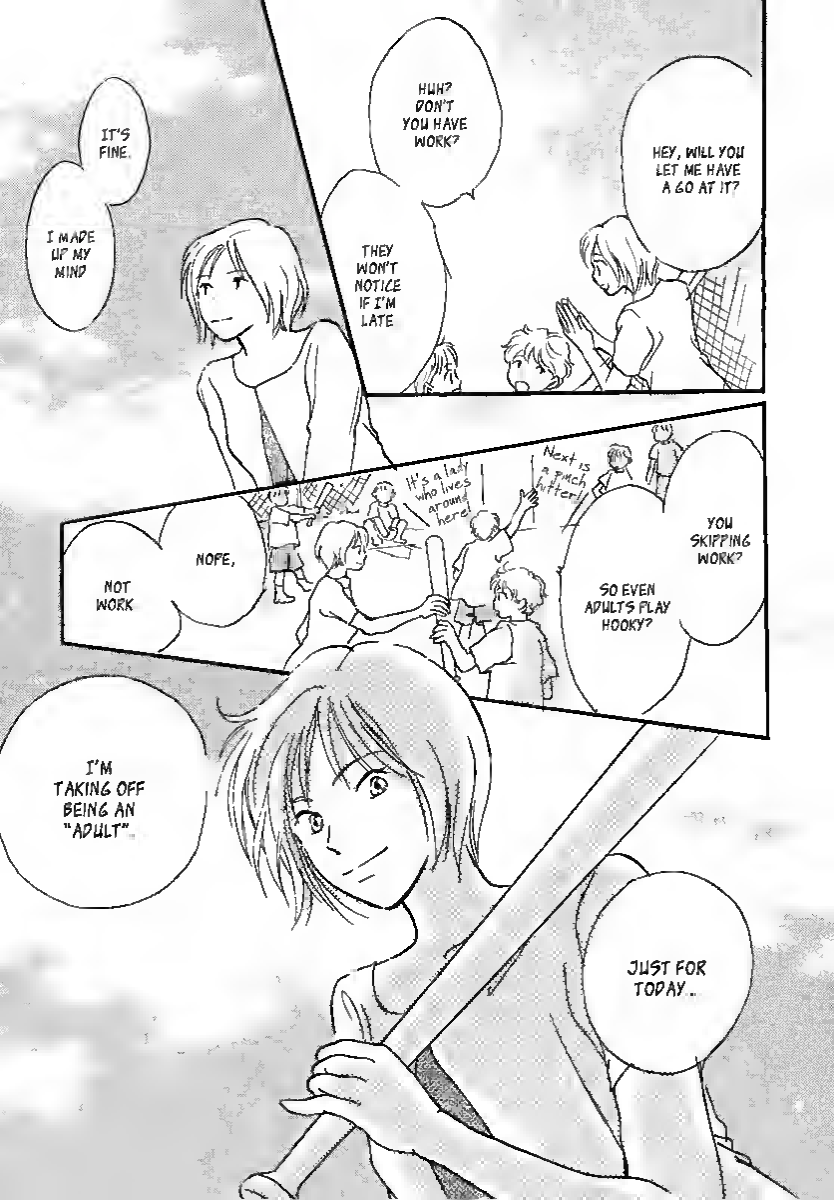
YUUKO, HOW ABOUT YOU JOIN IN WITH THE KIDS FOR THEIR RADIO EXERCISES?
IT'S A NICE SUBSTITUTE FOR AN ALARM CLOCK, RIGHT?
..YOU'RE KIDDING
MORNING
scratch scratch
WHAT A RUCKUS OUT THERE
HMPH
Thanks for breakfast
HE SAID HE'S GOT A BUSINESS TRIP IN KANAZAWA
That means we'll have a quick and easy dinner tonight
THAT'S EARLY
HE LEFT ALREADY
WHERE'S DAD?
HUH
JUST WHAT I PUT ON TOP OF THE TV, BUT IT'S ALL JUNK MAIL
HEY, DID ANY LETTERS COME FOR ME YESTERDAY?

EVERY GRAIN OF RICE...
WAS GROWN BY A FARMER
THESE TOMATOES AND LETTUCE, TOO..
IT'S NOT LIKE THEY MAGICALLY APPEARED IN THE SUPERMARKET'S PRODUCE SECTION
munch
THESE BECOME MY FLESH AND BLOOD
AND WILL BECOME PART OF THE FUTURE ME
PHILOSOPHY SO EARLY IN THE MORNING?
Or is it religion?

I've been saying it, haven't I?
That I'll move back in with my parents.
You're going to quit your job?
I'VE WONDERED...
IF THE JOB I'M DOING SHAPES ANYONE'S FUTURE
...so you were serious when you said you're going to take over the farm.
...hey, Yuuko, will you come with me?
Yeah.
My father's gotten old, you see.
and you get three square meals and a nap!
The whole family loves you and treasures you.
These days it's nice being a farmer's wife


I don't...
want to quit my job yet.
..don't say it like that.
So a nap is normal
Isn't that "nap" because the morning starts so early?
...that so?
CLACK
I'M OFF
HE LEFT RIGHT AWAY.
AND AFTER MAILING ME HIS NEW ADDRESS, HE HASN'T CONTACTED ME AT ALL
CRACK
Run for it!


MUST BE NICE YOU KIDS GET A WHOLE MONTH OFF FOR SUMMER VACATION
WE'RE STILL PRETTY BUSY ANYWAY YOU ADULTS ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE IT GOOD, YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT
THERE IS...
HOME-WORK
YOU DON'T HAVE HOMEWORK OR CRAM SCHOOL
TCH
Even when you grow up.
It's just that it's no longer things with one right answer, like in math.
I'D LIKE TO SWING THE BAT AROUND, TOO
You won't hit the ball just by swinging it
CRACK

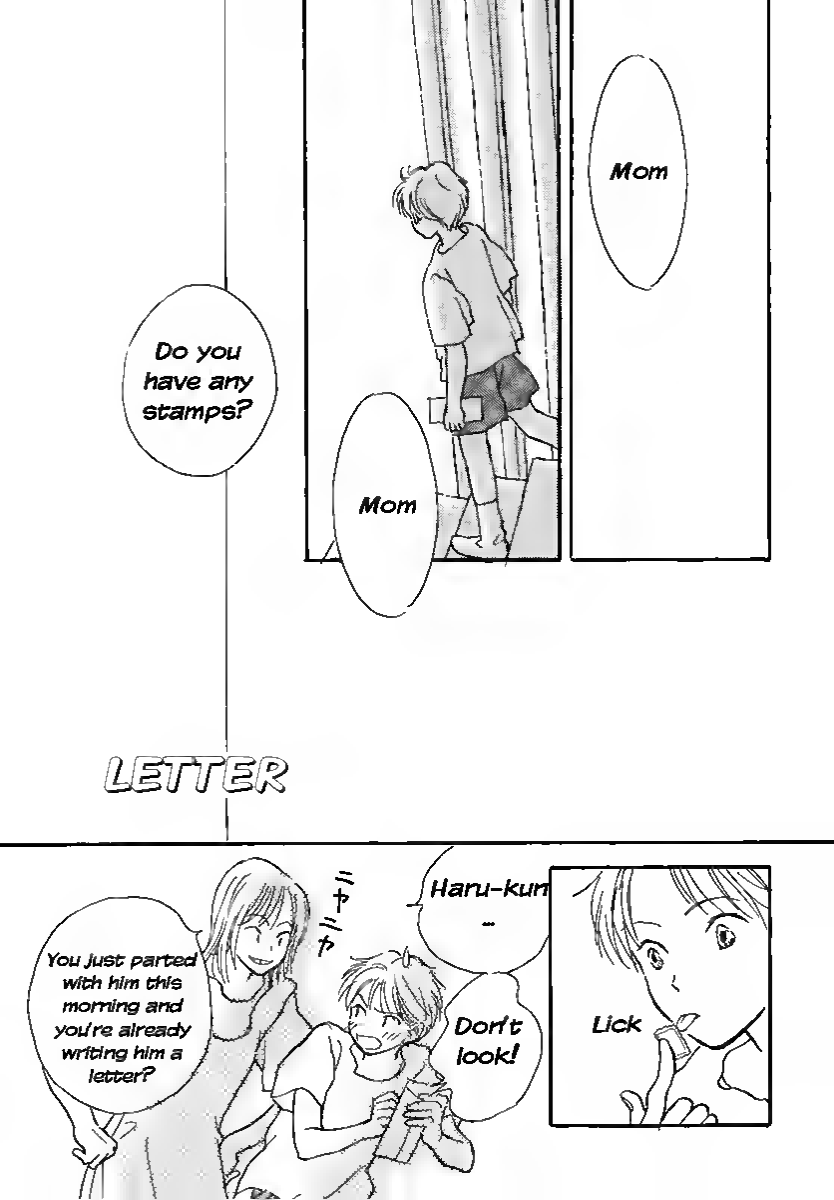

HEY, WILL YOU LET ME HAVE A GO AT IT?
HUH? DON'T YOU HAVE WORK?
THEY WON'T NOTICE IF I'M LATE
IT'S FINE.
I MADE UP MY MIND
YOU SKIPPING WORK?
SO EVEN ADULTS PLAY HOOKY?
It's a lady who lives around here!
Next is a pinch hitter!
NOPE,
NOT WORK
I'M TAKING OFF BEING AN "ADULT".
JUST FOR TODAY.

MAIL'S HERE!
THANKS!
OH, ONE FOR YUUKO
flip
To Yuuko
Hurry and come be my bride.
Freshman Farmer, Yori
CLANG
AH!
WOW!

End

★Asa no Kodomo, Tegami, Zange

I drew these stories alongside "Yoru no Donna" in a niche magazine
These three stories have the theme of "letters"


Mom
Do you have any stamps?
Mom
LETTER
Haru-kun -
Don't look!
Lick
ニヤニヤ
You just parted with him this morning and you're already writing him a letter?

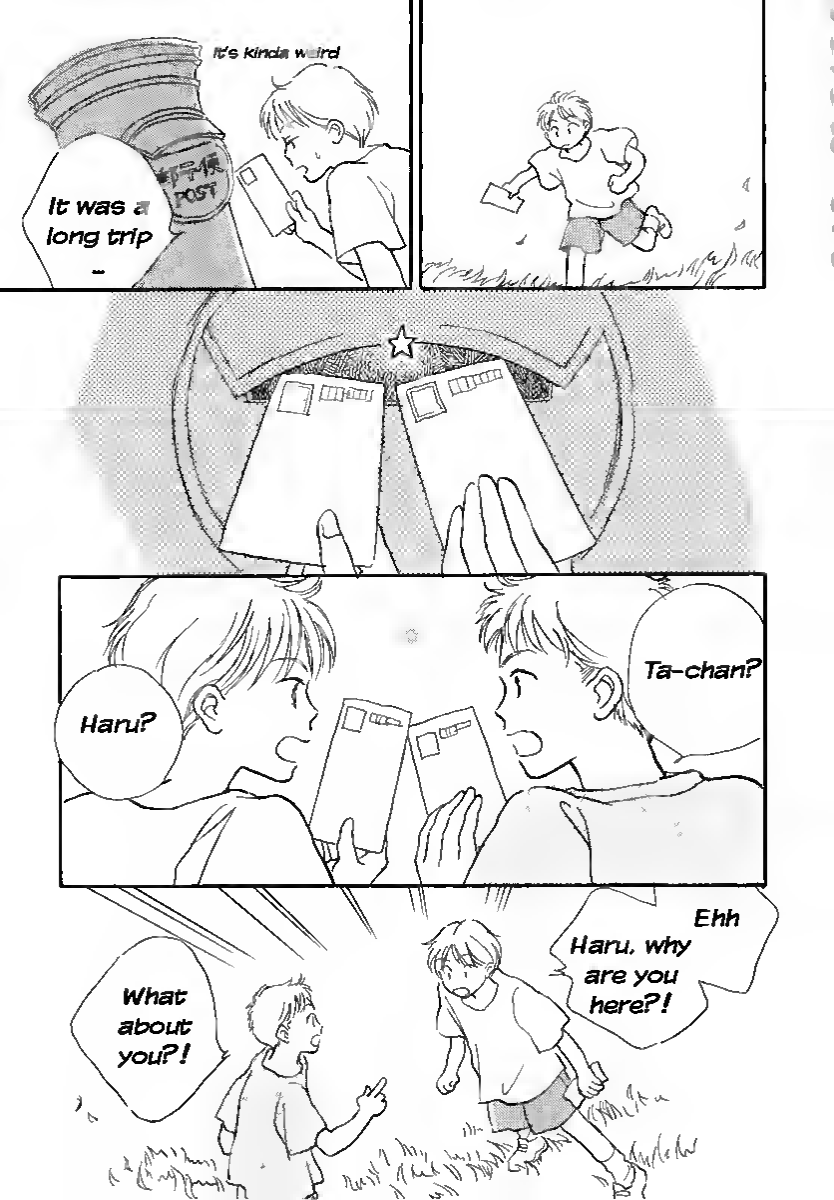
Why don't you do it tomorrow?
It's not going to get posted till tomorrow morning anyway.
Tatsumi
You're going now?
What is?
The closest one is at the vending machine
The mailbox
ばたん
Hey Tatsumi
IF I wait till morning I won't be able to send it!
Hey will you give me a letter, Ta-chan?

oh Ta-chan you had a computer or is it a cellphone?
...don't ask when you know it
meanie
So bothersome nowadays its email
Letter?
OK?
letters are good
I will write one too
Haruhiko
Promise
Hmm?
Promise

Hmm the closest one from here is
next to the community center----
That's weird
----It's not here
in front of the drug store
corner of the tobacco store----
Damn it
...

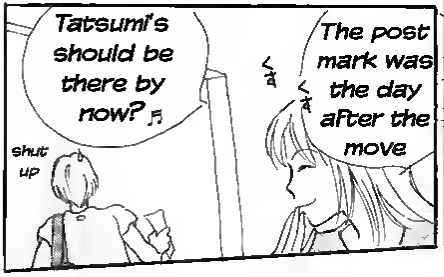
ha
It should definitely be here----
What?
Why?
Tonight,
Are all the mailboxes around town
having a meeting somewhere?
hahaha
sounds like a cult

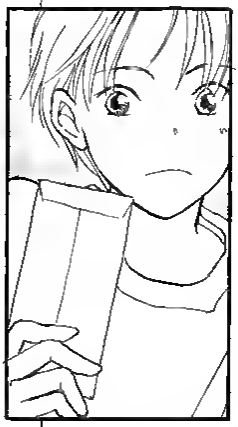
Where am I?
This open space----
Ah, a mail box


It's kinda weird
It was a long trip ~
Haru?
Ta-chan?
What about you?!
Haru, why are you here?!
Ehh

you came back?
No way
I've been looking for a mail box in my new town
and I just found one
ehhhhh
it takes 2 hours by train to get there
...I don't get it but
there is no point in posting it now
Yeah
...
Isn't the stamp going to go to waste?
rmmmm
Since the mail box is
right there
...
Yeah
...

Woah!
ひゅう
POS
KOTON
KOTON
Haru
..?





and from the letter

there was a summer night's smell

The postmark was from the town he moved to

End

Hell's Castle

We're currently recruiting staff.
[illegible]ns currently open are for **translators**, **editors**, and **proofreaders**

If you're interested and want to apply,
please do so via one of the methods below

email
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site
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#Hells_Castle

TRANSLATOR: YUUKO
CLEANER: KRUGZ
PROOFREADER: KRUGZ
TYPESETTER: KRUGZ
QUALITY CHECKER: DEMONICA

Come to our Channel and wish Yuuko a Happy Birthday!

LETTER

Happy Birthday Yuuko-san
From all your Loyal
Subjects at
Hell's Castle

COTTON

STORY 5

BY KONNO KITA

THE END

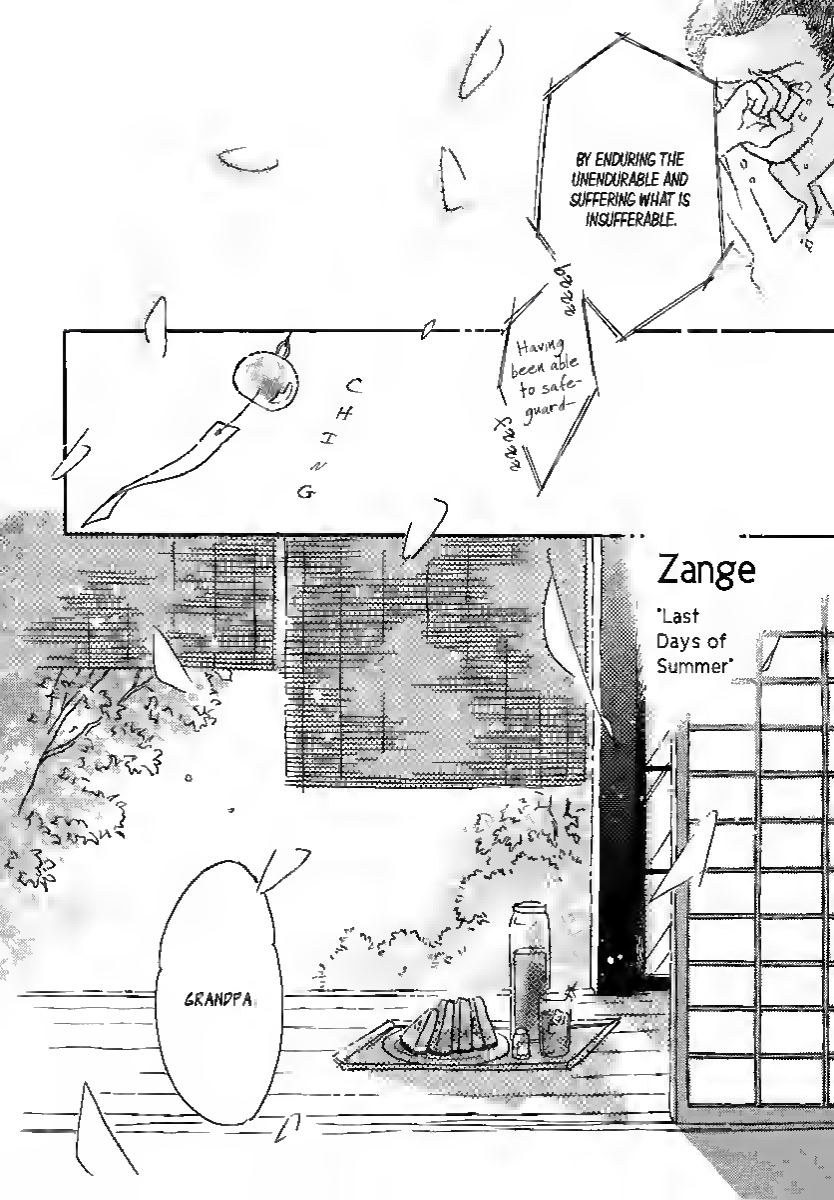
RAW HUNTER/QC ISHITORI
TRANSLATOR KALENDEL
EDITOR TIM

THE-END-MANGA.LIVEJOURNAL.COM

HEAD TO OUR BLOG TO VOTE FOR THE NEXT MANGA WE COMPLETE!

...THE HARDSHIPS AND SUFFERINGS TO WHICH OUR NATION IS TO BE SUBJECTED HEREAFTER WILL BE CERTAINLY GREAT
WE ARE KEENLY AWARE OF THE INMOST FEELINGS OF ALL YE, OUR SUBJECTS
HOWEVER, IT IS ACCORDING TO THE DICTATE OF TIME AND FATE THAT WE HAVE RESOLVED
TO PAVE THE WAY FOR A GRAND PEACE FOR ALL THE GENERATIONS TO COME—

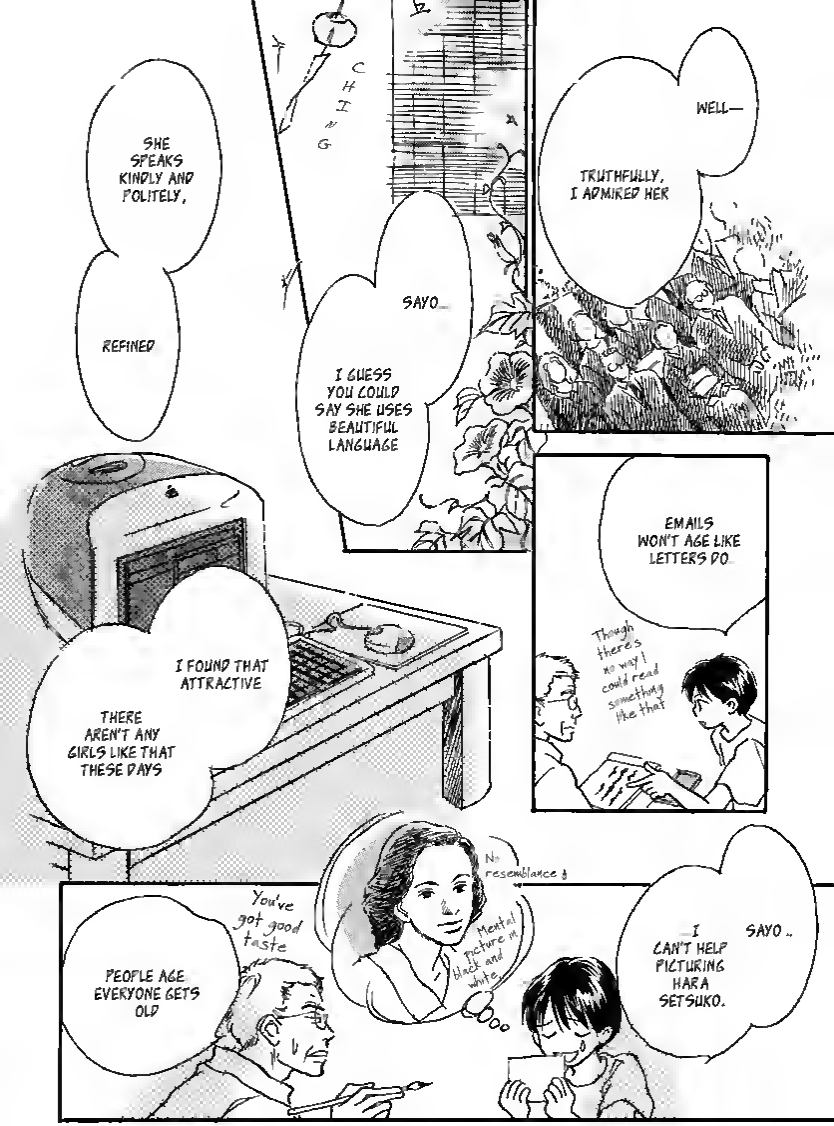
Note This is the radio broadcast of Emperor Hirohito s Imperial Rescript regarding Japan s acceptance of unconditional surrender at the end of World War II.


BY ENDURING THE UNENDURABLE AND SUFFERING WHAT IS INSUFFERABLE.
Having been able to safe-guard
C H I N G
Zange
"Last Days of Summer"
GRANDPA

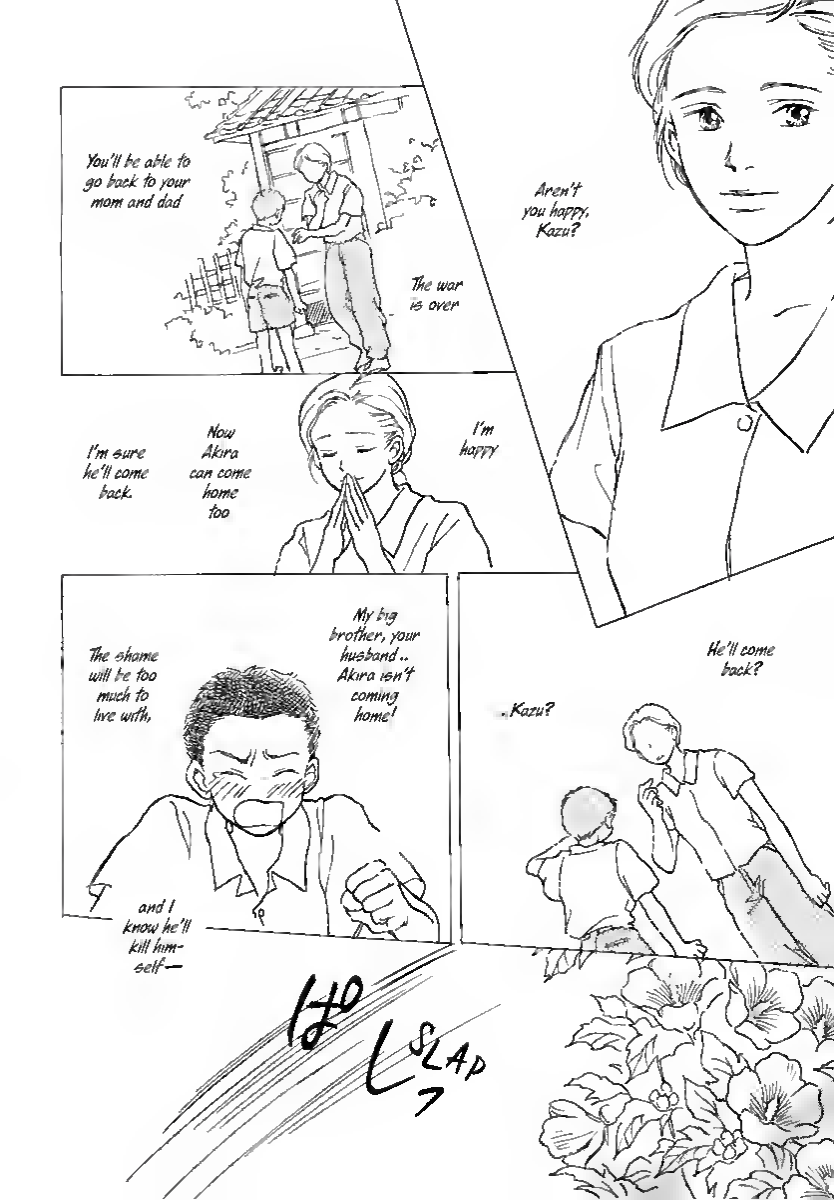
GRANDPA?
slide...
THE MAIL'S HERE
Oh!
I'M ALIVE
FWAP
A NOTICE FROM THE SENIOR'S SOCIETY,
AND ONE FROM SAYO
HM HM...

TAP
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
WRITING A RESPONSE
..ANOTHER ONE?
SAYO SENT YOU ONE, RIGHT? SHE WROTE THAT SHE WAS TYPING IT OUT...
AS HER GRANDDAUGHTER WAS TEACHING HER HOW TO
...
BUT IT'S SO EASY TO SEND AN EMAIL
RUB
RUB
GRANDPA, YOU SHOULD PRACTICE TYPING SOME TOO...
BE QUIET, YOU!
Stubborn old man

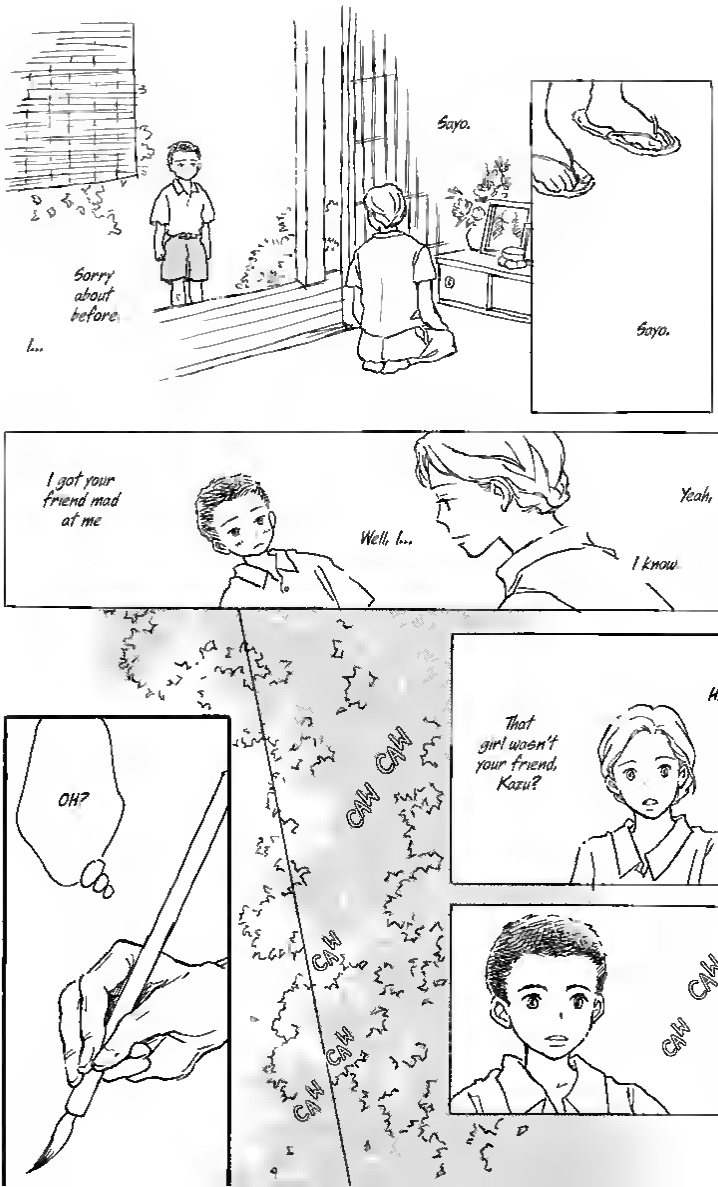
SHE SENDS US FEARS EVERY YEAR, REMEMBER?
OH, FROM YAMAGATA
pat!
WE'RE LIKE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS
DON'T BE SILLY SHE'S THE MATRIARCH OF THE HEAD FAMILY
HEY HEY, SO IS SAYO YOUR GIRLFRIEND?
grin
...OVER HERE
WHICH ONE'S SAYO?
A PHOTO? OF SAYO?
THERE IT IS
I KNOW THERE'S A PHOTO OF HER FROM AKIRA'S FUNERAL...
rummage
SHE REALLY IS A GRANDMA, HUH...
How old were you thinking it was?
OF COURSE
GAH, IT'S IN COLOR!


CHIRP
CHIRP
SHE SPEAKS KINDLY AND POLITELY,
REFINED
SAYO...
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY SHE USES BEAUTIFUL LANGUAGE
WELL—
TRUTHFULLY, I ADMIRED HER
I FOUND THAT ATTRACTIVE
THERE AREN'T ANY GIRLS LIKE THAT THESE DAYS
EMAILS WON'T AGE LIKE LETTERS DO...
Though there's no way I could read something like that
PEOPLE AGE. EVERYONE GETS OLD
You've got good taste
No resemblance
Mental picture in black and white
SAYO..
I CAN'T HELP PICTURING HARA SETSUKO.

Coming of age ceremony: Guild-sanctioned ritual in which boys in their late teens would adopt a male figure unavailable as the younger party in pederastic relationships
SHE WAS AS CAREFREE AS A BOY BEFORE HIS COMING OF AGE CEREMONY
SHE WORE HER HAIR TIED BACK TIGHTLY
ARE YOU MAYBE KINDA HOMO, GRANDPA?
"Boys before their coming of age"
SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG
CHIRP
CHIRP
HOMO? WHAT'S THAT?
HMM, WHAT'D THEY CALL IT IN YOUR DAY AND AGE
PEDER-ASTY?
WHACK
It's a lie
A lie.
It can't be.
There's no way our great Jaram could lose.


You'll be able to go back to your mom and dad
The war is over
Aren't you happy, Kazu?
I'm sure he'll come back.
Now Akira can come home too
I'm happy
The shame will be too much to live with,
My big brother, your husband.. Akira isn't coming home!
and I know he'll kill himself—
He'll come back?
..Kazu?
SLAP

It's OK.
It's going to be OK.
I'm sure that Akira's coming home
...really?
Really
Even if he's lost an arm
From now on you'll live together in peace.
So it'll be OK—


Sayo.
Sorry about before.
I...
Sayo.
I got your friend mad at me
Well, I...
Yeah, I know.
Hm?
That girl wasn't your friend, Kazu?
CAW CAW
CAW
CAW CAW
CAW
CAW
OH?

MEMORIES GET MUDDLED AT MY AGE, NOTHING TO BE DONE ABOUT IT
SO THAT GIRL WASN'T SAYO?
?
RRRR
RRRRR
GRANDPA
GRANDPA, IT'S A CALL FROM YAMAGATA
—SAYO HAS...?

KAZUO,
THANK YOU FOR COMING SUCH A DISTANCE.
IT'S NOTHING.
CLATTER
SATSUKI?
ARE YOU OK? MAYBE ANEMIA
YOU SHOULD LIE DOWN FOR A BIT IN THE INNER ROOMS
THAT GIRL REALLY LOOKED AFTER HER.
SHE WAS HER GRANDMA'S GIRL
EVEN LAST YEAR AFTER AKIKA PASSED AWAY AND SAYO WAS DESPONDENT...
he he
THAT GIRL ACTUALLY BROUGHT HER A COMPUTER
BUT BY THE START OF FALL SHE WAS BED-STRICKEN WITH THE FLU, SO THEY WERE TOGETHER A LOT
SAYO BECAME LIKE A KID AGAIN.

AND YOUR LETTERS, KAZUO..
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER SHE UNDERSTOOD THEM OR NOT,
BUT THEY WERE OFTEN AT HER BEDSIDE
OH?
IN HERE
TAP
SHE'D READ THEM TO HER,
OVER AND OVER

HEY.
WE FINALLY MEET.
SO THAT—

PARDON ME
Was you, huh—
OH NO, WELCOME.

OH NO,
THE MAP YOU GAVE ME WAS REALLY EASY TO UNDERSTAND
IF YOU CALLED, I WOULD HAVE COME TO THE STATION TO GET YOU
UM, THESE ARE FOR YOU
Please share them with everyone
PEAR
YOU CAME HERE CARRYING THIS HEAVY THING?
SORRY ABOUT THAT AND THANK YOU
UM...
Carry it carefully
NOW DON'T TRIP
AH, YEAH

I'M SORRY!
HUH?
THE "SAYO" WHO'S BEEN MAILING YOU...
IS ME
I'M SORRY FOR NOT SAYING ANYTHING.
AT FIRST,
I WAS JUST HELPING HER
BUT AFTER FALL, GRANDMA..
SHE WASN'T REALLY AWARE OF HER SURROUNDINGS.

IT'S OK.
IT BROKE MY HEART,
SO I...
WHAT ARE WE DOING, STANDING AND TALKING IN THE ENTRYWAY
NOW, COME ON IN
chirp
I HAD A DREAM

ON THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL, AFTER I COLLAPSED FROM ANEMIA
I MET MY GRANDMOTHER
SHE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN AGAIN
EVEN IF IT WAS A DREAM, I GOT TO TALK TO HER...
I FELT LIKE IT HELPED ME OUT A LITTLE
IT WAS SAYO...
WHO YOU REALLY HELPED OUT...

HEY, IS THE TEA DONE YET?
YUP, JUST NOW
HM?
GRANDPA
ARE YOU LONELY, WITH SAYO GONE?
CLICK
..WELL NOW
IT WAS THE SAME WITH YOUR GRAND-MOTHER,
BUT WHEN YOU GET TO BE MY AGE, YOU'RE PREPARED FOR IT
KINDRED SPIRIT?
AS THEY PASS ONE BY ONE..
YOU GRADUALLY GET USED TO THE LONELINESS OF LOSING A KINDRED SPIRIT
YES, SINCE EVERYONE CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF THE SAME MEMORIES

I WONDER IF SHE LOOKS LIKE SAYO DID
SHE LOOKS A LOT LIKE HER
..YEAH,
WHISPER
SHE LOOKS LIKE A "BOY WHO HASN'T COME OF AGE", RIGHT?
HEY, GRANDPA
OH- WERE YOU A HOMO TOO?
HERE, YOU YOUNGSTERS DO THE WORK.
OW!
WHAP
He's too strong for an old guy
WOBBLE
HERE YOU GO
THANKS
Hey, Sayo.

still have a great deal of time

End

It took me over a year and a half to write Cotton in a niche magazine. Even though it's not very long, I wound up drawing sporadically, so that's why. But some modifications were made.

Following "Yoru no Douwa", I have to thank the publisher Poplar for deciding to release this in book form so more people would have the chance to read it outside the magazine.

And to those that read this, I'd be happy if you enjoyed it.

Konno Kita 紺野キタ
2003, 9